Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes

CABINET

22 JANUARY 2016

REPORT OF FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A.6 **CHANNEL SHIFT STRATEGY**
(Report prepared by Mark Westall, Barbara Pole, Emma Norton)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the adoption of the Tendring District Council Channel Shift Strategy (Appendix 1) for Tendring District Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Channel shift is a superb driver of value. It is the process of moving service or contact mechanisms from one channel to another in order to reduce the cost to serve, and enhance your service – in particular moving face to face and phone channels to the web. Source – Capita IT Services.

The 2013 SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Managers) survey of average channel costs showed that each face-to-face customer interaction costs £8.62, each telephone interaction costs £2.83 and each online interaction costs just £0.15. Furthermore it stated that, across local authorities, two thirds of customer contacts are now through digital channels.

The Customer Service Working Group at Tendring District Council carried out a "snapshot in time" review of its residents contact channels during June 2014 and, although digital channels currently make up a only a small part of the customer interaction, it is fair to say that web visits have increased dramatically since the last audit of channels in 2012 and other forms of contact are on the decline. Likewise, the 2014 Tenants Satisfaction Survey showed that amongst this group, those that had access to the internet at home had risen by 8% since 2012.

Not only does it make good business sense to manage and promote digital channels, they are fast becoming the channel of choice, and residents will demand access to services in this way. There is no suggestion that Tendring District Council should close its various reception desks to force residents onto a different channel, but more that we should provide digital access points across the district to make it easier for our residents to deal with us. By enabling and encouraging customers to change their choice of contact channel we can ensure resources are directed towards those services that will still require face-to-face and telephone contact.

The Public Sector Channel Shift Strategies Survey Report 2015 by GOSS Interactive reveals that moving to online channels such as web and social media is expected to save Councils around £1.55m each in the next year, an increase of 345% over 2014. Based on

the SOCITM (Society of I.T. Managers) survey and our own snap shot in time review, if we were able to manage just 10% of our customer contact from face-to-face and telephone towards an online solution, we could save an estimated £112,000 per year. We are not a large Council but we obviously have a long way to go based on our survey.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Tendring District Council Channel Shift Strategy.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

A managed channel shift will contribute towards providing the same service for a reduced cost and will impact on the Council's priority to provide *'value for money in everything we do.'*

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance
The Channel Shift Strategy does not suggest that there needs to be an increase in any planned budgets, but more that there needs to be a corporate wide overview of the channels we are using throughout the Council to communicate with its customers. As stated in the SOCITM survey, dealing with customers via digital methods is actually the cheapest channel which will result in cost savings in terms of human resource in the future.

Staff Resources
The Channel Shift team will be made up from existing resources as will the implementation of the strategy.

Risk
If we do not have a Channel Shift Strategy we risk each department developing their own digital channel without consultation. Each channel is then likely to look different, feel different, and have different functionality. This may make the channels more difficult to find, will confuse our customers, and eventually they will disengage and will revert to more costly traditional methods of contact.

LEGAL

This action proposed is within the Council's discretionary powers.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

OFCOM facts and figures:

Average time spent per month browsing online on PCs or laptops 2014 Vs 2013 up 17%
Proportion of adults with broadband in the UK (fixed & mobile) Q1 2014 = 77%
Proportion of people who use their mobile handset to access the internet Q1 2014 = 47%
Proportion of UK adults with a smartphone Q1 2014 = 61% (up from 51% Q1 2013)

There is an inevitability about this move towards digital channels. If managed correctly they are the easiest channel to access for customers, are available 24/7, not just during Council opening hours, and match customer expectations with regards customer service. They are also available everywhere, not just in Council offices, and the applications and services to which digital channels can be applied are endless. Tendring District Council has made a good start with the review of the corporate website and the commitment towards the public access kiosks, but adoption of the Channel Shift strategy will ensure a focus on customer needs and customer service, that the pace of channel shift is managed and possible savings are banked, and that a resource is identified to track digital trends and tastes with the view to implementation on our behalf if appropriate.
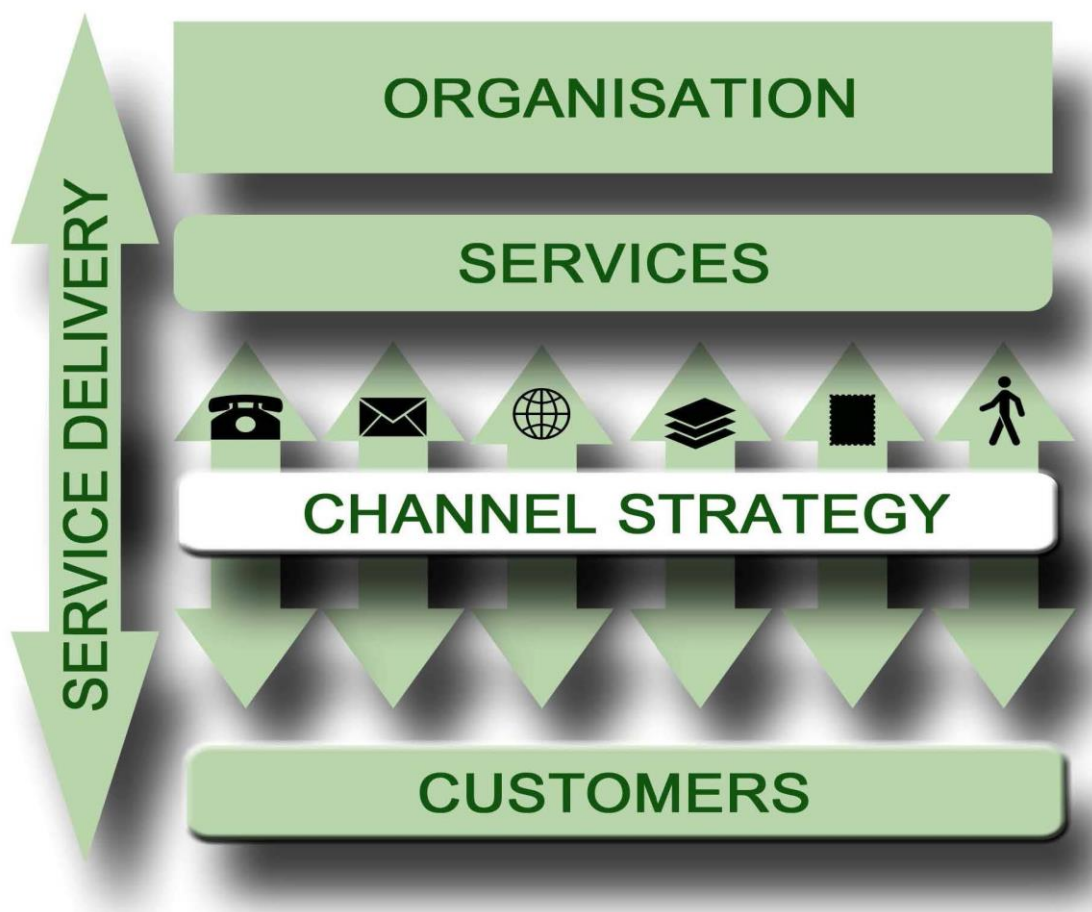
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Tendring District Council Channel Shift Strategy

CHANNEL SHIFT STRATEGY
Adopted: January 2016?

CHANNELS STRATEGY

Author	Barbara Pole,
Version	3.0
Date Issued	
Document status	Version 3

Distribution

	Names	Title/Organisation	Purpose
1.0	Mark Westall, Emma Norton,	Customer Services Team (CST):	Review and input
2.0	Paul Price, John Higgins, Lisa Leggett	TDC officers	Review and input
3.0	John Higgins, Lisa Leggett, Mark Westall, Emma Norton	TDC officers	Information

Revision History

Version	Date Updated	Revision Author	Summary of Major Changes Made
1.0	18/12/2014	Barbara Pole	Draft updated
2.0	19/12/2014	Mark Westall	Proof read
3.0	24/12/2014	Barbara Pole	Update

Part 1 Introduction

WHAT IS A CHANNEL STRATEGY?

Tendring District Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public, and value for money to the taxpayer. The channels through which public services are delivered, and by which the public has contact with the authority, (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means), are a critical part of public service provision, and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

A channel strategy is an organisation's plan for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it has available.

A channel strategy is not simply a plan to move service provision to online channels.

WHY IS A CHANNEL STRATEGY IMPORTANT NOW?

Customers receive a high standard of customer service from many public and private sector organisation.   However, customers sometimes have low expectations of services provided by local government, and it will be necessary to exceed rather than meet these expectations if we are to achieve channel shift to cheaper and/or more effective channels. To achieve this, the public sector must continue to raise its own standards of service across all the channels it uses and offers.

In order to meet the needs of customers, Tendring District Council must provide services that are:

•   Easily accessible
•   Simple to use
•   Streamlined
•   Convenient
•   Cost effective
•   Robust

It is also important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well as their skill sets when selecting channels.

Rising internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for public service providers. Competent online services are easy and quick to use, available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden. Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers and taxpayers.

However, the public sector must also meet the needs of people who do not (yet) have access to the internet. Therefore 'Digital Inclusion' is a core element of any government/public sector channel strategy.

The benefits of channel shift to the organisation:

• Cost savings from a reduction in person-to-person customer contact
• Cost savings from shifting enquiries from high to low cost service channels
• Increase in handling efficiency allowing resources more time to deal with complex enquiries/vulnerable customers
• Increased customer satisfaction
• More accurate feedback and enhanced reputation
• Automation between front and back office service

The benefits of channel shift to our Customer are:

- An open-all-hours service
- No physical queues
- No call centre queues
- Tailored online forms
- Better data security
- Vulnerable citizens will be the focus of traditional channels.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The need for insight and evidence
The process of developing and implementing a channel strategy needs to be guided by insight and evidence specifically relating to:

- The customer and their journey
- The services an organisation is providing and each service area in question
- The current delivery channels at the organisation's disposal as well as those that may be available to be/need to be used in future
- Other organisation specific factors that may have an impact on service provision and delivery

It is also important to understand the wider online services market, as expectations of online services are driven by customer experiences of using similar services of other organisations.

Enabling IT Infrastructure Investment
The Council is mid-way through delivering an adopted £1.5 million 3 year Strategic IT Investment Programme. In addition to replacing the Council's core IT infrastructure, from a digital inclusion and enabler perspective the programme includes; the provision of new video enabled self-service kiosks, staff mobility trials (new laptops and tablets), replacement corporate intranet.

The planned Microsoft Business Skype (previously Microsoft Lync) telephony service will unify different media contacts for officers; voice, fax, mobile, text and email, enhance and add new functionality to the Council's aging contact centre and ultimately enabling video calls to be set up with residents, staff, and other public sector partners, for example Essex County Council Social Services. Ongoing Council website improvements include; enhanced content, improving self-service payment options, improved mobile phone access through enhanced e-forms.

Organisational challenge
A channel strategy needs to become an integral part of the structure of the organisation and the way the objectives of the organisation are realised. It cannot be superimposed or retrofitted onto existing practices and as such is likely to require or precipitate considerable change in working practices and culture.

We also need to recognise that people will use different channels not just for different types of interactions, but also to suit their own convenience. Particularly at a local level, an integrated channel strategy is required that takes into account the varied ways in which local people may want to interact with the Council.

Barriers to Implementing a Channel Strategy
Another factor to consider when developing a channel strategy are the barriers that could affect a successful rollout. According to the results of the 'Goss' Public Sector Channel Shift Strategies Survey, 2015, despite a growing recognition of the value channel shift has to local government organisations, the main barriers include staff culture (22%), systems integration (21%), technology (17%), lack of budget (17%), lack of skills (13%), lack of senior management buy-in (6%) and legislation (1%).

There is no reason to believe that Tendring District Council will be any different from any other local authority so it is important to consider where the main drivers to the implementation should come from within the organisation.

Part 2 – Basic Principles & Scope

PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

To outline the broad principles for the ways in which Tendring District Council will deliver its services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the customer in mind.

SCOPE

1. This strategy document sets out the basic principles by which Tendring District Council will deliver its services to the public through the contact channels currently available.

   Contact channels in scope include:

   - Face to face
   - Email
   - Internet with enhanced mobile phone web content, e-forms (including partner and commercial websites)
   - Telephone
   - Mobile technology (including SMS text messaging and mobile web)
   - Automated telephone technology
   - Post

2. This document focuses on three key types of contacts between the authority and the customer

   - Transactions (e.g. notification of change or circumstances, reporting a problem or paying a bill)
   - Interactions (e.g. obtaining advice, public consultations, petitioning)
   - Information Provision (e.g. leaflets, web pages)

3. This strategy should be relevant to the nature of the services provided by the authority and ensure that its services are provided through a range of contact channels appropriate to the customers' individual needs and preferences in a non-discriminatory way.

CHANNELS HIERARCHY & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The choice of contact channels available to the public is growing as new technologies are developed and released. For example in the last few years we have seen the emergence and growth of channels such as digital social media (such as Facebook, alternate realities and Twitter), mobile internet, interactive TV and more recently mobile phone applications (apps).

Without a channel strategy many organisations typically adopt one of two approaches to using these channels by either launching all of their products and services on all new channels without much thought to the relevance and cost of doing so or focusing on switching their customer contact to the cheapest channel (often assumed to be the internet) without much thought to the relevance of this channel to their entire customer base.

This is however a generally accepted model for the effectiveness of the major channels of contact available today as shown on the next page.

CHANNEL EFFECTIVENESS

What this model shows is that as we move up the triangle the cost of delivery typically gets cheaper for the organisation. A SOCITM survey in 2013 suggested that, on average, face to face costs £8.62 per transaction, £2.38 for telephone contact and 15p for web based services.

The public sector Channel Shift Strategies Survey Report 2015 by GOSS Interactive reveals that moving to online channels such as web and social media could potentially save councils around £1.55m each year.

However for some types of contact a greater level of human contact is required, particularly for contacts that require some level of reassurance.

For example.

Imagine you have received a letter asking you to pay a bill or court proceeding will commence. You have just paid the bill and now want reassurance that your account is up to date and that there will be no further action. You are unlikely to log on and have a look at the organisation's website's FAQ page for reassurance (even though this might be the most cost effective solution for the organisation), but you may be more inclined to ring up the contact centre for reassurance and confirmation that matters are in hand. In this example, there may be a case for having online FAQs relating to debt recovery in terms of best practice, but there is probably little chance of shifting this individual contact online.

It is therefore vital to fully understand each type of contact and the level of reassurance that the customer is likely to require before focusing the organisation's efforts on the design of any contact channel for that service.

But of course the conundrum doesn't end there. There may be little hope of shifting the channels that a certain group uses if that group simply does not access that channel. For example, internet penetration is at a lower level amongst the jobless, the financially excluded, the elderly and people who do not read or speak English – all traditionally high users of Revenues and Benefit Services. Therefore, it may not be a good use of corporate time, and taxpayer's money, to attempt to shift these Revenues and Benefits contacts completely online albeit that a move to Universal Credit will push more claimants on-line as the DWP shift on to a live information exchange. Conversely, mobile telephone penetration is very high amongst teenagers, so SMS messaging might be a good channel to advise of last minutes Leisure Centre closures in bad weather. Customer insight goes a long way in the design of any channel strategy.

There are unfortunately even more factors to consider including "channel hopping", (an individual's propensity to use different channels for the same transaction depending on what is convenient to them at the time) and the public's increasing confidence in new channels that develops over years and sometimes months, creating a continually changing landscape.

There is also the customers experience to take into account and this is where the organisation has the chance to reduce the amount of contact required regardless of the preferred type. Imagine if you have just moved into the area. Depending on your requirements would you want to contact Council Tax, Parking, Electoral services, Careline, Waste, Leisure etc. individually? By breaking out of the silos and providing a joined up approach for our customer, the organisation can provide a better service for the customer and reduce costs.

The key factors to an effective channel strategy:

1   Detail the deliberate design of the channel strategy for each type of service, bearing in mind the level of human interaction required and the needs of the targeted customer base

2   Identify areas that can be joined up to allow the customer to make one contact for multiple reasons.

3   Fluidity – the constant reviewing of the effectiveness of the channel strategy for each type of contact bearing in mind changing technologies, channel hopping and changing customer habits

4   Simplicity – the optimum channels for the organisation should be the easiest to use for the customer to drive a shift in customer behaviour

5   Inclusion – no group should be denied access to a service because of disability, language or cost of the access channel (e.g. mobile phone costs, broadband access). Options should be made available other than the organisations preferred method of contact.

6   Cost effectiveness – particularly in the current economic climate, finding ways in which to deliver services effectively but at lower cost will be increasingly important.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

Tendring District Council has shown a natural shift in customer behaviour over the last couple of years leading to some departments being more proactive than others in investigating and implementing their own platforms for managing channel shift. This approach needs to be more consistent throughout the authority and ideas and experiences shared across the departments.

With the recent changes in structure there is a positive progression towards an organisation wide Customer Service Centre.   This will give Tendring the ability to drive channel shift in a consistent and effective manner.   As the Customer Service Centre is in its infancy this presents the ideal time to explore and implement the best forms of contact, and in return "free up" the back office to maximise efficiencies throughout the Council.

To enable us to measure the shift in customer behaviour we have compared the results of two data gathering exercises carried out in 2005 and 2007, a survey Tendring carried out in September 2012 for a Socitm exercise in Customer Contact, and the Snapshot of Customer Contact we carried out earlier this year.   All of these surveys were carried out over a two week period.

	Face to Face	Phone	Web	Email*	Post	Total Contact
2005	15329	12035	3194	1307	7358	39223
2007	16869	16248	Not available	1844	7028	41989 (- web figures)
2012	3718	14275	20844	1100	4600	44537
2014	2330	8694	27245	894	1867	41030
Shift	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆

*Please note – The emails included are those delivered to generic email addressed only and does not include individual emails

You will note from the figures that there has been a reduction in phone calls of around 28%, an increase in web visits of approximately 853%, a decrease in face-to-face of around 85%, mainly due to the closure of the cash offices in 2012, and a decrease in emails of 28% (generic email address only - does not include personal email address).

The figures above show that our customers chosen form of contact have changed dramatically over the years; however, the volume has not changed to any great extent.   This, in some part, is due to the continuing improvement of the Tendring District Council website and proves the value of exploring greater use of online technology (see graph below). As there is a natural shift towards digital channels, we would expect this trend to continue, and possibly accelerate, with the introduction of the Customer Service Centre and the implementation of this Channel Strategy.

To add further credence to the channel shift strategy, the latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey, carried out by the housing department, shows that in the last 2 years there has been an 8% increase in tenants access to the internet and that 80% of tenants have access at home.

As an example of what can be achieved, the Revenues and Benefits Service has recently updated its pages on the website and is in the process of launching a number of online forms.

The first form to be uploaded was the "move" form, which was traditionally a time consuming process taking approximately 15 minutes over the phone.   With a combination of implementation on the internet and quick links on emails, these forms are now emailed direct to customer or they can find them on the website.   The forms themselves are developed with fields that require filling in so that the information returned is fit for purpose.   In the first week after upload, 89 forms were completed online and, although a small number of these were filled in with the contact centres guidance, this has made an approximate saving of 22¼ hours of officers time.

This is just one method available of providing a better customer experience for the residents and visitors of Tendring.

Channel Shift at Tendring District Council

Website Visitors
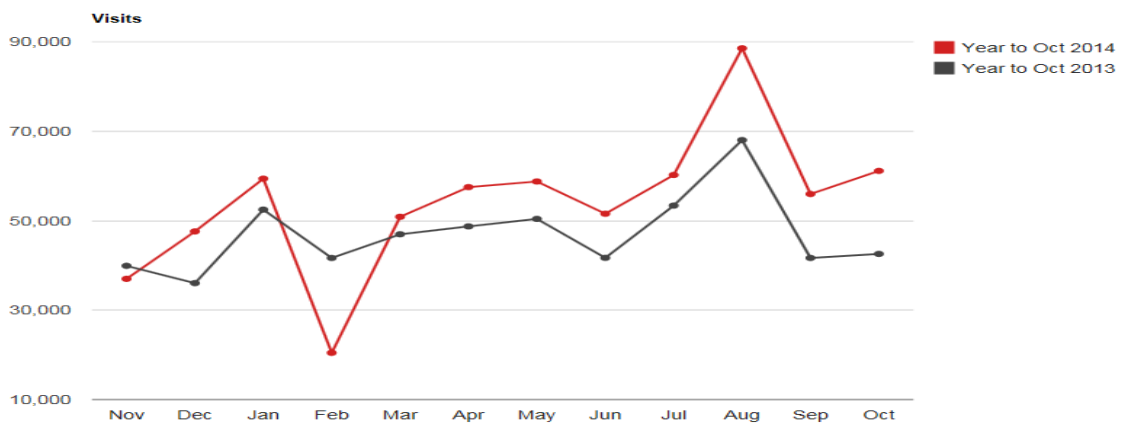

Socitm has stated that out of the 50 shire district authorities they monitor, Tendring has the highest percentage of local residents using their website.   The chart above shows TDC compared to the average of all 50 local authorities.

Part 3 – Tendring's Channel Strategies

LOCAL CONTEXT

Tendring District Council is a non-metropolitan district council in north-east Essex, which is bounded by the river Stour to the north, the North Sea to the south and east, and the River Colne to the west, which forms part of its boundary with Colchester Borough Council.   The Tendring District includes the towns of Manningtree, Harwich, Frinton, Walton, Clacton and Brightlingsea. The number of households in the district as at the end of August 2014 was 68,507.

Part of the district is affluent but Tendring also has one of the most deprived small wards in the country. In 2010/11 the unemployment rate in over 16 year olds was estimated to be 9.4% which was higher than the average in England and the highest in Essex. Tendring also has the highest percentage of pensionable aged residents in Europe.   In 2010/11 3,285 over 65's were thought to have dementia which is the highest number in Essex and 45% of the districts population reported having a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which is also the highest in Essex.

According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2009 around 75% of households in the South East had home internet access with over 75% of the same population accessing the web in the last 3 months. During this time 40% of the population were able to access the internet via a mobile phone or other portable connection.

It is also worth noting that 86% of the population in the South East currently have access to digital TV channels and 80% of the UK population owned a mobile phone in 2008.

Whilst we were unable to find specific figures for the availability of communications technologies in Tendring it is important to note that national statistics indicate that in the highest income decile group, 98 per cent of households owned a home computer and 96 per cent had an internet connection in 2008. This compares with 33 per cent of households in the lowest income decile group who owned a home computer and 26 per cent who had an internet connection. As Tendring has a mix of affluent and deprived pockets it is likely to have a higher than average population who do not have access to digital media, it must therefore be kept in mind that our channel strategy needs to include a chapter on "digital inclusion"

Tendrings population is made up of approximately 138,048 individuals (as published in the 2011 National Census), each with specific needs and preferences as to how they would like to contact the authority. This integrated channel strategy seeks to provide a full range of choices of access designed to ensure that no individual, group or community is disadvantaged through lack of access to the services the authority offers.

OVERARCHING CHANNEL STRATEGY

1   Tendring District Council will make access to its services available through appropriate and cost effective contact channels designed with the needs and preferences of its individual customers and council taxpayers in mind.

2   Tendring District Council will seek to encourage greater usage of the most effective contact methods, by creating a series of deliberate and targeted channel shifts.

3   Tendring District Council will not discriminate against any individual by limiting the choice of contact methods available.

4   Tendring District Council will take in to consideration the customers journey and provide a joined up service to enhance their experience

OWNERSHIP OF TENDRING'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

Tendring District Councils Channel Strategy and its implementation will be the responsibility of the Chief Executive supported by the Corporate Director, Life Opportunities, the Commercial Manager and the Customer Service Team.

Tendring's Channel Strategy will complement the ongoing improvements being carried out with regards to channel-shift, including the Strategic IT Investment Programme works and the Corporate IT Team's continued support as a key enabler in delivering Tendring District Council's Channel Strategy, along with the support of every Service Unit Manager.   It is none-the-less important that delivery of this strategy is focussed through clear ownership and that the balance and key driver is customer focus.

By appointing lead officers from within Life Opportunities, which will form the nucleus of the Customer Service Centre, it is believed that a simple and streamlined governance arrangement will be in place to best serve the people of Tendring. This arrangement should ensure that there is consistency of service delivery standards across all of the contact channels and the associated services that the council offers.

The Corporate Director, Life Opportunities, the Commercial Manager and Customer Service Team will be responsible for ensuring that the contact channels used for delivering services are:
- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Robust

REVIEW PERIOD OF TENDRING'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

Tendring District Council will treat this strategy as "business as usual" with a view to constantly evolving the strategy. A formal review and republishing of this document will be made annually subsequent to its initial publication.

GOVERNANCE OF CONTACT CHANNELS AT TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

The first steps have been made to pull together customer services and simplify the governance of the various contact channels that the authority operates. Since the changes in management structure, and with the natural shift in customer expectations, there have been efficiencies made and cost savings realised. For some details of these savings, please see Part 2 under the heading "Proof of Concept"

The ownership of the various contact channels at Tendring District Council is structured as follows:

Channel	Owner
Telephone/Contact Centre	Corporate IT/ Contact Centre Manager
Website	Corporate IT Website Manager
Email – Generic	Service Managers
Letters – Generic	Service Managers
SMS	Service Managers
Face to Face	Service Managers
Social Media	Service Managers
Mobile Telephone	Corporate It/Service Managers

Specific issues regarding contact are allocated as follows

Issue	Owner
Digital Inclusion	Corporate IT/Customer Service Team
Accessibility	Corporate IT/Customer Service Team
Avoidable Contact	Customer Service Team
Channel Shift	Corporate IT/Customer Service Team

THE AVOIDABLE CONTACT STRATEGY

> "To reduce the need for our customers to contact us by reducing red tape, automating processes, and working with partner authorities to provide "joined up services".

What is an "Avoidable Contact" Strategy?

Local authorities are fundamental points of contact for the customer when seeking access to public services. They provide key services for their local communities that greatly affect the quality of life for individual customers and the overall community.

In accord with the vision of the Local Government Delivery Council and the principles of the Service Transformation Agreement (www.hmtreasury.gov.uk/media/B/9/pbr_csr07_service.pdf), the customer experience for both customers and businesses when contacting their local council should be one which is responsive, timely and efficient.

However, both local authorities and their customers also have limited resources and want to interact as efficiently as possible. By identifying customer contact that is 'avoidable', the local authority and its partners are better placed to redesign the way services and information are made more accessible for their customers, so they do not have to make unnecessary, valueless contacts which are both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider.

Tendring District Council will work with its partners and internal departments to design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact with the public sector multiple times to complete one transaction. For example changing address once, rather than contacting multiple agencies, checking their balance and making a payment online or chasing up progress on a reported incident or fault.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Unnecessary Contact

1   A permanent Customer Services and Channel Shift team has been established to analyse data from our main customer access channels to look for opportunities to reduce the need for customers to make unnecessary or multiple contact with the authority.

2   We will improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone by growing our contact centre, improving our back office processes, and providing a more joined up approach across services.

3   We will participate in national efficiency projects that aim to reduce the need for unnecessary contact with public sector organisations.

"AVOIDABLE CONTACT" Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
AC1	We will work with all internal services and partner organisations in the public and voluntary sector to streamline services to eliminate multiple customer contacts with multiple organisations – e.g. Registering a death	Customer Services Team	
T4	To develop targets and measures to identify and improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone	Contact Centre Manager	
T5	Implementation of new Contact Centre software allowing the ability to carry out more meaningful performance management to identify peaks in activity and provide better resourcing where required	Contact Centre Manager	

AC2	To use telephone call data and customer feedback to identify areas of improvement within the council and work to eliminate red tape, process failure and unnecessary cost to the public	Customer Service Team	
AC3	To participate in national efficiency projects that aim to reduce the need for unnecessary contact with public sector organisations	Customer Service Team	
AC4	Broaden scope outside the organisation to actively look at end-to-end process opportunities to eliminate contact (e.g. Recently made unemployed through disability– LCTS and Benefits (Local Council), Disability Living Allowance (DWP), need of a carer (County Council))	Customer Service Team	

Performance management and Governance

- The Commercial Manager will have the day to day responsibility for Tendring District Council's Channel Strategy and its implementation.
- The Customer Service Manager will have day to day responsibility for the "no Contact" strategy.
- "Avoidable Contact" will be measured.
- Contact data across our main contact channels will be measured and analysed by the Customer Service team on a monthly basis.

CHANNEL SHIFT STRATEGY

> "To design cost effective, efficient and user friendly means of contacting the council and then encourage our customers to use the channels that work best for them"

What is Channel Shift?

Channel Shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to access, or interact with, services via channels other than those to which they normally choose.

Deliberate channel shift is the design and marketing of effective and efficient channels because they are the most appropriate channels for the type of contact, customer and organisation in question. Channel shift forms one part of an overall channel strategy, and implemented well it can lower costs, build reputation, empower the customer and improve the overall service proposition. Shifting customers to particular channels involves behaviour change on the customer's part, but once they are aware of the channels available, they will use the one that works best for them

Tendring District Council will encourage residents to shift to new and more effective channels by a number of means, including the following actions

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Create Channel Shift

1   They key electronic access channels will be the responsibility of the Customer Service Team and Corporate IT who will ensure that the actions in this strategy documents are implemented. These channels are telephone, internet, mobile web, SMS, email, post, social media, talk by text, instant messaging and mobile internet.

2   Our staff will promote and signpost our customers to the website in order to self-serve. They will also use the public website to transact their day to day work ensuring the site is fit for purpose for our residents, and making improvements as required.

3   All new services, including information services, will be designed with mobile friendly content and forms and around the user for 24/7 web access wherever possible, ensuring all channels have access to the same information to accommodate 'channel hopping'.

Channel Shift Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
CS1	Wherever possible, our staff will use the public website to transact in their day to day work to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents	Corporate It Website Manager and all sections	
CS2	Ongoing website content review / improvement with content changes based upon data driven demand to increase public confidence, usage and interaction with the site. For example traffic reports, weather, events and electronic petitions.	Corporate IT Website Manager and all sections	
CS3	We will use our marketing or communications expertise to direct customers to the most appropriate channels	Customer Service Team	

CS4	All new services including information services will be designed around the user for 24/7 web access first wherever possible, ensuring all channels have access to the same information to accommodate 'channel hopping'	All Service Managers monitored by the Corporate IT Web Manager	
CS6	Transactions across all channels will be reviewed and may be withdrawn or users signposted to more effective channels where appropriate	Customer Service Team	
CS7	All channels should have exactly the same information available to them (i.e. if a text was sent, this same content should be visible if the same user logs in to the website, or rings the contact centre)	Customer Service Team	

Performance Management and Governance

- The Commercial Manager will have the day to day responsibility for Tendring District Councils Channel Strategy and its implementation.
- The "exit pages" and transaction abandonment on the website will be analysed each month to see where transactions are failing and corrections made accordingly.
- We will compare the effectiveness and usage of different channels for each service and seek to shift contacts to the most appropriate channels.
- Business cases will be prepared to move more transactions online (including information transactions), that take into account the dual benefits to the public, and ease of use in the contact centre.
- We will aim to reduce the volume of calls into our Contact Centre by shifting these contacts to the web and increasing the channels the Contact Centre are able to managed e.g. generic emails.
- We will aim to increase our unique website visitors per annum.

DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

> "To ensure that customers who do not have access to digital channels at home or work are not disadvantaged when communicating with the council"

What is a Digital Inclusion Strategy?

Over 40% of the UK population do not use online channels, including websites such NHS Choices, Directgov and tendringdc.gov.uk

Exclusion from access to digital channels matters for these users, especially as the digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest needs from public services.

It also matters for the delivery of efficient public services, because when people cannot access services online they invariably access them via alternative means which are generally more expensive. Again, the priorities set out in the Digital Britain report reinforce the importance of digital inclusion; the report sets out the Government's plans to drive digital participation in the context of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan and the proposed Digital Switchover of Public Services programme which started in 2012. The report also reiterates the Government's commitment to ensuring that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of customers.

It is therefore important that any channel strategy includes plans for communicating with these hard to reach groups.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Digital Exclusion

1   Provide public internet access at our key locations, e.g. Tourist Information, Council Offices

2   Provide assisted access to our website for the vulnerable and digitally excluded when required

3   Widely advertise our full choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups, e.g. transient and socially excluded groups.

Digital Inclusion Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
D1	To provide assisted access to our website for the vulnerable and digitally excluded when required	Service Managers	
D2	To widely advertise our choice of contact channels, particularly hard to reach groups for example transient and socially excluded groups	Customer Service Team	
D3	Never design a service that is available only through digital channels	Customer Service Team	
D4	To provide public internet access at key locations, e.g., Council Offices	Commercial	
D5	To seek opportunities to offer "internet kiosk" access to our website in partner organisations.	Corporate IT Manager	
D6	To participate in the government's "Digital Britain" programme of broadband expansion	Head of Customer Service	
D7	To implement the Electronic Democratic Management System	Democratic Manager	

Performance Management and Governance

• The Customer Services Manager will have the day to day responsibility for Tendring District Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy

ACCESSIBILITY OF CONTACT STRATEGY

> "To provide a full range of contact channels for each of our services, with some channels providing enhanced access for customers with special requirements"

What is an "Accessibility of Contact" Strategy?

In the context of this document, accessibility of contact refers to the ease or difficulty that a customer may experience whilst using different electronic access channels to obtain services from the authority. For example, someone with hearing difficulties may find the telephone unusable and may prefer to communicate through email. Equally a customer who does not have English as their first language may not be able to access any contact channel without appropriate translation services.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Provide Access For All

1 Continually engage with groups representing those with specific requirements for the way they contact us and ensure that an appropriate choice of channels is available to those individuals.

2 Ensure that we widely advertise our choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups, for example young people or vision impaired customers.

3 To provide documents in a range of languages and easy read options where practical on our website.

Accessibility of Contact Strategy Actions In Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
W11	To provide a range of language and easy read options where practical on our website and when it is not practical to do so to clearly indicate how a customer can obtain translation services or obtain information in a format suitable for them (e.g. Large text, MP3 etc.)	Corporate IT Web Manager	Underway and Ongoing
A1	To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers	Contact Centre & Section Managers	
D1	To provide assisted access to our website for the vulnerable and digitally excluded when required	Service Managers	
D2	To widely advertise our choice of contact channels, particularly hard to reach groups, for example young people or vision impaired customers	Customer Service Team	
D7	To participate in the government's "Digital Britain" programme of broadband expansion	Customer Service Team	
A2	Continually engage with groups representing those with specific requirements for the way they contact us	Service Managers	
W13	Implement a responsive website that adapts for those using a mobile device, to ensure the website is accessible on all devices.	Corporate IT Website Manager	

Performance Management and Governance

• The Commercial Manager will have day to day responsibility for fair access to electronic contact channels
• To obtain and maintain the "WCAG 2.0 level AA" rating for accessibility by all to our website
• Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment of the channel mix and regularly consult with Equality & Diversity champions and make reasonable adjustments to the channels as needed.

Part 4 – Strategies For Specific Channels

TELEPHONE STRATEGY

> "To minimise the number of contact numbers published and the number of calls received, to provide fast access to an expert officer and to reduce the amount of irritating low value calls that our residents have to make"

The 3 Key Actions To Provide Easy Telephone Access

1. To continue providing one main phone number (Switchboard) for the organisation which can be easily found and specialist phone numbers to enable skill setting within the contact centre and keep the use of IVRs (interactive voice response) to a minimum.

2. To reduce the number of customer queries received and develop measures to enhance first time resolution on the telephone.

3. To implement Microsoft Business Skype as Tendring District Council's preferred telephony system.

Telephone Strategy Actions In Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
T1	To continue providing one main phone number for the organisation which can be easily found in order to make contacting the council straightforward for our residents	Contact Centre Manager	
T2	To continue providing a limited number of specialist phone numbers available to our residents to allow "menu-less" access to our contact centre	Contact Centre Manager	
T3	To develop targets and measures to identify and improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone	Contact Centre Manager	
T4	To improve/expand the automated phone services where appropriate as an option	Contact Centre Manager	
T5	To implement new Microsoft Business Skype and contact centre software	Corporate IT Manager, Contact Centre Manager	
T6	To maintain overall service excellence as evidenced by customer feedback, industry awards and accreditations	Contact Centre Manager	
T7	To standardise the operating times for service specific and specialist phone numbers	Customers Service Manager	
T8	To provide Microsoft Business Skype video calling as a form of contact for customers through access points such as Kiosks	Corporate IT Manager	
T9	To pursue federated access to partners information via Microsoft Business Skype e.g. Essex County Council	Corporate IT Manager	

Performance Management and Governance

- The Corporate IT Manager and Commercial Manager will have joint ownership of the telephone strategy.
- To use telephone call data and customer feedback to identify areas of improvement within the council and work to eliminate red tape, process failure and unnecessary cost to the public
- To seek opportunities to work with other public sector contact centres to improve overall service, accessibility and improve value for money
- Wherever possible, use the public website to transact in our contact centre to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents
- Standardise the times that service specific and specialist phone numbers are manned.

MOBILE PHONE STRATEGY

"To use the emerging mobile phone technology in a tactical manner to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase speed of communication or reduce direct contact"

The 3 Key Actions To Develop Mobile Telephone Access

1   To explored access to council telephone based services using only 01,02 and 03 prefixes to ensure the minimum costs to mobile phone users, particularly on "pay as you go" tariffs

2   To use outbound text messaging to confirm appointments and chase payments

3   To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers

Mobile Telephone Strategy Actions In Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
M1	To provide access to council telephone based services using local call charges/non-geographic local call charging to ensure the minimum costs to mobile phone users, particularly on "pay as you go" tariffs	Contact Centre Manager	
M2	To develop appropriate mobile friendly web-based forms for mobile phones including fault reporting and simple information provision	Corporate IT Manager / Service Managers	
M3	To use outbound text messages to advise of issues such as reduced bin collections through bad weather	Customer Service Team and Service Manager	
M4	To use outbound text messages to chase outstanding payments	Contact Centre Manager and Service Managers	
M5	To use outbound text messages to confirm appointments	Customer Service Team and Service Managers	Underway and ongoing
A1	To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers	Contact Centre Manager	
M6	To develop new inbound and outbound text services	Contact Centre Manager	
W13	Implement a responsive website that adapts for those using a mobile device, to ensure the website is accessible on all devices.	Corporate IT Website Manager	

Performance Management and Governance

•   The Corporate IT Manager and Customer Service Manager will have responsibility for the mobile phone strategy
•   To monitor opportunities and take up rates of mobile technologies
•   Performance and usage of this channel will be monitored as services are developed

WEB STRATEGY

> "To provide a single, comprehensive, easy to access and up to date website that allows anyone to transact and interact with the council 24/7"

The 3 Key Actions To Develop Mobile Web Access

1. Promote the website as the main access point for the council's services for simple information and transactional services

2. To provide a fit for purpose website for the organisation to make contacting the council straightforward for everyone.

3. To increase the usability of our online systems to make them the channel of choice for simple transactions in order to promote channel shift

Web Strategy Actions In Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
W1	To promote the website as the main access point for the council's services for simple information and transactional services	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W2	To provide a fit for purpose website for the organisation to make contacting the council straightforward for everyone.	Corporate IT Website Manager	Ongoing
W3	Ensure that business cases for improvements reflect both increased public satisfaction, but also reduced contact centre effort in providing mediated access.	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W4	To ensure that all web content is written in plain English and is easy to understand	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W5	To increase the usability of our online systems to make them the channel of choice for simple transactions to promote channel shift	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W6	To provide further map integration to both transactional and information systems	Corporate IT GIX Custodian / Corporate IT Website Manager	
W7	To integrate all online transactions directly into back office systems to prevent double entering of information	Corporate IT	
W8	To ensure that all council leaflets and literature are made available via the website in order to reduce printing, cost and environmental impact	Service Managers	
W9	To ensure that all communications activity is replicated on the council's website	Service Managers	
CS2	Ongoing enhancements made to the website to increase public confidence, usage and interaction with the site. For example traffic reports, weather, events	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W10	To invest in technology that allows publishing to and from multiple websites not operated by Tendring District Council from a single point to ensure any shared data is always up to date	Corporate IT	
W11	To provide a range of language options where practical and when it is not practical to do so to clearly indicate how a customer can obtain translation services	Corporate IT Website Manager	
W12	Establish a roadmap for a single account for residents across Police, NHS, Districts and County Councils through the Tendring Local Strategic Partnership.	Customer Service Team	
W13	Implement a responsive website that adapts for those using a mobile device, to ensure the website is accessible on all devices.	Corporate IT Website Manager	

Performance Management and Governance

- The Corporate Website Manager working in collaboration with the Commercial Manager will have the day to day responsibility for the website.
- To ensure that the website is available and operational 24/7
- To aim to place 100% of our transactional services online, and to encourage customer usage to reduce costs and provide 24/7 access to the authority's services
- To maintain overall service excellence as evidenced by customer feedback, industry awards and SOCITM usability ratings
- To obtain and maintain the "WCAG 2.0 level AA" rating for accessibility by all.

FACE TO FACE STRATEGY

> "To maintain our Face to Face services, but to provide these services in more appropriate and cost effective locations by fully trained expert officers"

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Face to Face Provisions

1. To seek opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations and design our property portfolio accordingly

2. To provide assisted access to our website for the vulnerable and digitally excluded when required

3. To undertake process reviews to identify potential channel shift and quality improvements to our face to face service

Face to Face Strategy Actions In Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
F1	To undertake process reviews to identify potential channel shift and quality improvements to our face to face service	Customer Service Manager	
F2	To provide assisted access to our website for the vulnerable and digitally excluded when required	Service Managers	
F3	To seek opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations	Transformation Project Team	
F4	Define and deliver face to face service training to all customer facing staff	Customer Services Manager	
F5	Provide face to face staff with the same level and quality of information that the contact centre has access to, using mobile technology if appropriate.	Customer Services Manager	
F6	To reduce face to face contact to allow more access for the vulnerable and become a channel for the more complex enquiries	Customer Service Team	
F7	To continue and expand on the outreach surgeries and provide points of contact within the rural areas as required	Service Managers	
F8	To standardise reception opening times throughout TDC	Customer Service Manager	

Performance management and Governance

- Individual service managers will be responsible for their own locations with regards customer service standards in consultation with the Customer Service Manager
- Customers will be seen at the appointed time or, if we are delayed, will receive an explanation and be kept informed
- Customers will be acknowledged within 5 minutes of arrival if they have no appointment, or be offered an alternative time
- We will provide a clean, tidy and comfortable waiting area and, wherever possible, a space to see us in private.
- Continue to provide and expand outreach surgeries where required
- Standardise all reception opening times throughout the council and provide a consistent service to the customers.

POST/PAPER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

"To reduce the amount of post and paper communication by better use of electronic channels"

The 3 Key Actions to Develop our Post/Paper Provisions in Line with the Transforming Working Arrangements Report

1. To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled

2   To place more of our leaflets and information online in order to minimise printing and reduce our environmental impact

3   To scan, verify and distribute incoming post and print outgoing from a central point.

Post/Paper Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
E2	To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled	Ebase Team / Service Manager	
P1	To place more of our leaflets and information online in order to minimise printing and reduce our environmental impact	Service Manager	
P2	To use second class post as our main postal tariff to minimise cost to the council tax payer	Print Unit	
P3	To use PPI discounts on all outgoing mail to minimise the cost to the council tax payer	Print Unit	
P4	Implement E-agenda and reduce the cost of printing and postage to Councillors	Democratic Services	
P5	Print all outgoing documents in one central area to allow better control over layout and the ability to combine multi-sheets to maximise post discounts	Democratic Services.	
P6	Collect Customers email addresses where appropriate and use as an alternative to physical post	Service Managers	
P7	Integrate email and postal distribution lists in order to give people the choice to opt for email only.	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	

Performance management and Governance

•   The Democratic Services Manager will have the day to day responsibility for the incoming and outgoing Post function.
•   To reply to all letters within 10 working days
•   Monitor demand across all channels for a representative sample of information
•   Monitor costs for postage.
•   Build a database of email addresses where appropriate and use as an alternative to physical post

EMAIL STRATEGY

"To reduce the amount of email communication by better use of electronic forms and other electronic channels but to encourage email correspondence over paper based communication"

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Email Provisions

1. To develop other channels in the ways detailed in this document to provide more attractive options to the email channel

2. To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of emails handled.

3. Integrate email and postal distribution lists in order to give people the choice to opt for email only.

Email Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
E1	To develop other channels in the ways detailed in this document to provide more attractive options to the email channel	Customer Services Team	
E2	To provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of emails handled	Ebase Team / Service Managers	
E3	To aim to place 100% of our transactional services online and to encourage customer usage to reduce costs and provide 24/7 access to the authority's services	Corporate IT Website Manager	
E4	To provide status updates for any transactions that are started on the web but cannot be completed online – for example reporting a fault	Corporate IT Website Manager	
P7	Integrate email and postal distribution lists in order to give people the choice to opt for email only.	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	

Performance Management and Governance

- The Commercial Services Manager will have the day to day responsibility for generic emails.
- To answer all emails within 10 working days
- Work with partners to ensure inbound emails contain all the information needed, ideally in a format that can be semi-automated
- To use quick links for replies to keep Customer Service consistent

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

> "To avoid being an early adopter of new and emerging media, rather to learn from the pioneers of such products and implement cost effective and tested new channels"

The 3 Key Actions to Develop our New Media Provisions

1   Update the electronic petitions facility

2   Regularly review emerging and maturing new media channels

3   Develop our mobile phone provisions, particularly SMS messaging

New Media Strategy Actions in Detail

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
N1	To implement and update existing electronic petition software	Democratic Manager / Corporate IT Website Manager	
N2	Review the use of online forums	Corporate IT Website Manager / Service Managers	
N3	Review the use of social networking sites – e.g. Facebook, Twitter	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	
N4	Review the use of social media sites – e.g. Youtube	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	
W6	To provide further map integration to both transactional and information systems	Corporate IT GIX Custodian / Corporate IT Website Manager	
M2	To develop appropriate mobile friendly web- based forms for mobile phones including fault reporting and simple information provision	Customer Service Team and Service Managers	
M3	To use outbound text messages to advise of temporary changes to services	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	
M4	To use outbound text messages to chase outstanding payments	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	
M5	To use outbound text messages to confirm appointments	Customer Service Manager and Service Managers	
A1	To use inbound text messaging to communicate with hearing impaired customers	Contact Centre Manager	
M6	To develop new inbound and outbound text services	Customer Service Team	
W10	Ongoing enhancements in technology that allows publishing to and from multiple websites not operated by Tendring District Council from a single point to ensure any shared data is always up to date	Corporate IT / Corporate IT Website Manager	
N5	Manage the reputation of Tendring District Council on various forms of Social Media		

Performance Management and Governance

- The Customer Service Team will work with Corporate IT to monitor and develop new media opportunities
- All new product launches should be subject to a full business case
- Overall governance of new media should be the responsibility of the Communication Group

Part 5 – Glossary of Terms

Customer

A person using a public service. The person could be using the service for personal reasons (e.g. Theatre tickets), for business reasons (e.g. licence applications), either for themselves or on behalf of someone else.

Service

A service is a provision of information or a transaction that an organisation delivers to its customer. Examples of public sector transactional services are the parking permits and council tax.

Service delivery

The process by which a customer receives or accesses a service. Service delivery often involves multiple stages, for example a public sector service delivery process may involve:

- Enquiries and requests for information (e.g. "What benefits am I entitled to?")
- Service fulfilment (e.g. registering for benefits and payment of benefits to customer)
- Follow up and after care (e.g. reviewing benefits entitlement after a change in circumstances). Public sector service delivery can involve a complex chain of actions across multiple organisations.

Channel

A means of communication by which a service is delivered or accessed. Examples of direct channels used by the public sector include post, telephone, mobile telephone, web, and face to face.

Channel strategy

An organisation's plan for the channels it will use to deliver services to its customers. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the demands of its customers using the resources it has available.

Efficient

Channels that are efficient, deliver services without wasting time, money or effort for either the customer or service provider.

Effective

Channels that are effective, deliver services which meet the desired outcome, with minimal difficulty for the customer or service provider.

Insight

An insight into a customer is a deep truth based on an understanding of customer behaviour, experiences and attitudes, and their needs from a service. Organisations with insight into their customers can deliver the services their customers need, through the right channels.

Part 6 – References Used

1. Tendring District Council's "Customer Service Standards" (available at www.tendringdc.gov.uk)
2. Cabinet Office "Channel Strategy Guidance Modules" (available at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)
3. Socitm Customer Access Improvement Report (internal only)
4. Essex Local Authority Portraits produced by the Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment August 2012 (internal only)
5. Goss Public Sector Channel Shift Strategies Survey, 2015 (available at www.gossinteractive.com/public-sector-channel-shift-strategies-2015)