

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
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CABINET

16 DECEMBER 2016

REPORT OF ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A.4 CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

(Report prepared by Mark Westall)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the adoption of the Tendring District Council Customer Service Delivery Strategy (Appendix 1).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few years the Council has taken a number of key steps to transform the way it works and delivers services to residents and customers. The use of new technology has seen a significant growth in the use of online services, office and building use is being rationalised and staff are now able to access the systems and information they need to provide services and do their jobs without having to be office based.

In these financially demanding times the challenge is how to improve the level of customer service the Council delivers to its residents, yet reduce the cost of that delivery. The opportunity exists to adopt a Customer Service Delivery Strategy that will make Council services more accessible in terms of both location and times available, and yet will also free up Officers to deal with the more complex cases taking into account the demographics of Tendring and the desire to work more closely with partners. It may also offer the opportunity to bid for external contracts and create revenue streams.

The proposed Customer Service Delivery Strategy is an important element within the wider project to ‘transform the way we work’ and is consistent with the Office Transformation Strategy report that is also on the agenda in that there would be the creation of a first class hub in Clacton where residents would access Council services. A centralised telephony hub would also be created to deal with general enquiries and high volume transactions, possibly freeing up officers within back-offices.

Outside of Clacton, the Customer Service Delivery Strategy will work alongside the I.T. strategy. Although we have already closed offices in Frinton and Harwich, the opportunity now exists to work with strategic partners to create shared service locations in the towns with the larger population. This has already proven to work well in Harwich where we have staff members that deliver services (new claims by appointment, and change of circumstances by drop-in) two days a week from JobCentre Plus in the High Street. They are averagely seeing 20 people per day. TDC officers will be able to offer services in other locations using mobile working technology and support residents to use self-serve kiosks.

The strategy document will be aligned with that of Channel Shift as the two topics are inextricably linked and covers the different contact methods and access points that can be used and also how the Council will maintain a service that is known for its quality.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Tendring District Council Customer Service Delivery Strategy.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Adopting the Customer Service Delivery Strategy will impact on the Council's priorities to:

“Deliver high quality affordable services”

“Transform the way we work”

“Make the most of our assets”

“Engagement with the community”

“Effective partnership working”

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance

Adoption of the Customer Service Delivery strategy does not have any financial implications per se; however elements within the strategy will need financing in order to bring to fruition.

The “My Tendring” customer portal will be brought to Council as a separate business case and will be on an invest-to-save model.

The creation of the Customer Service Hub within the Pier Avenue offices will be undertaken through the transformation and assets strategy.

The self-serve kiosks that will be deployed throughout the district have already been budgeted for with the I.T. transformation project.

Staff Resources

The Customer Service Team will be created from existing resource; for the most part from within the Contact Centre and the Customer and Support team.

Risk

The failure to adopt a Customer Service Delivery Strategy allows for individual services to continue with their own models, buying I.T. solutions that are neither integrated nor transferable to other departments, duplicating work streams, and operating in silos. TDC would not achieve the status of a “tell us once” Council. The likelihood is also that necessary savings from automation and integration would not be made.

Lastly there is a reputational risk if TDC does not keep abreast of changes being made by local authorities elsewhere.

LEGAL

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

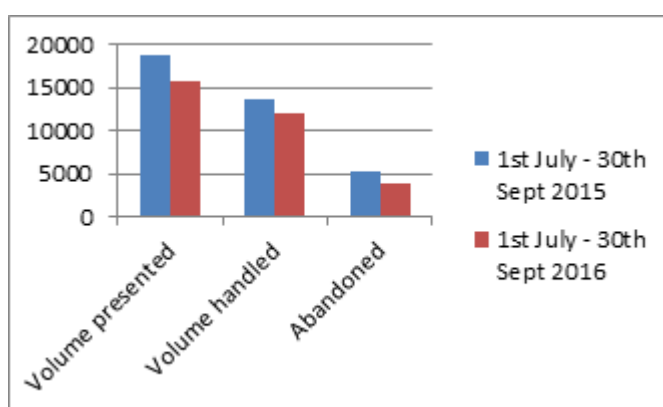
OTHER IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed. No adverse impacts were found.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

A great deal has already been done to improve the service that we deliver to our customers. The number of abandoned calls is down by 1400 (September 2016 Vs September 2015) and the number of calls presented is also greatly reduced as shown by the graph below.



Customers also do not have to necessarily queue, or wait for an advisor to be free, in Pier Avenue. They can often be re-directed the self-serve kiosks available there.

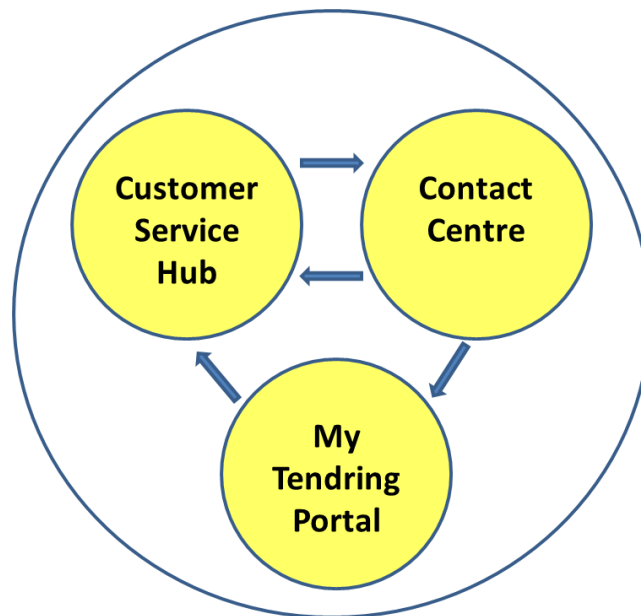
The technology now available (Contact Centre telephony already purchased and to be installed in the New Year, self-serve residents portals) means that we can improve customer service, yet deliver savings in terms of contact time.

The strategy allows for support for the percentage of our residents who will need extra help to complete their transactions with us, yet also offers flexibility for those customers that are able, and have the wherewithal, to do it themselves, 24 hours a day, online.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Tendring District Council Customer Service Delivery Strategy

CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY



Document History

Author	Mark Westall
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Distribution

	Names	Title/Organisation	Purpose
1.0	Mark Westall, Emma Norton, Barbara Pole	Customer Services Team (CST):	Draft
1.1	Mark Westall, Emma Norton, Barbara Pole, Paul Price, Martyn Knappett		Pre Management Team

Revision History

Version	Date Updated	Revision Author	Summary of Major Changes Made
1.2	12/08/16	Mark Westall	Update re changes from transformation agenda
1.3	24.11.16	Paul Price	Post MT

This document sets out Tendring District Council's (TDC) strategy for delivering **Customer Service** across the district. This strategy will be aligned with that of Channel Shift, office/asset rationalisation and developing human resource/staffing realignments as the topics are inextricably linked.

The strategy covers the different contact methods and access points that can be used and also how the Council will maintain a service that is known for its quality.

It should be understood that for TDC to achieve the aims set out in this strategy (such as the creation of a Customer Service Team and a centralised Customer Service Hub) other factors outside of the scope of this strategy will also need to be considered i.e. rationalisation of Council assets to create the necessary funds. It will also rely upon a cultural shift for staff and for managers to realign resources to the new way of working.

A main driver for the strategy will be the Tendring District Council Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The relevant points that affect the Customer Service Delivery Strategy are:

- Deliver high quality affordable services
- Transform the way we work
- Make the most of our assets (including people)
- Engage with the community
- Support rural communities
- Effective partnership working

We also aim to achieve a 'Tell Us Once' situation whereby if a resident gives one service within the Council some information about themselves, the whole Council will have access to that knowledge (within various data restriction protocols). This can only be achieved with a Customer Record Management (CRM) system.

Current Position

Contact is currently made with the Council through a variety of interfaces:

Face-to-face - TDC currently has multiple front doors. Residents need to know which office to go to in order to access a particular service and although this information can be found on the website this can be frustrating if more than one service is required. For face-to-face contact, our current services do not have ease of access for those unable to travel. Current service access points are: (not exclusive)

Pier Avenue, Clacton – Benefits, Council Tax & Rent enquiries, Licensing
Town Hall, Clacton – Housing (allocations, homelessness, repairs, ASB), Beach Huts
Council Offices, Weeley - Planning, Building Control, & Environmental Services
Northbourne, Clacton – Parking services.

In a very simple scenario a new resident may need to seek assistance with housing, benefits and recycling – all of which are currently based at different locations. We also offer very few Council services from locations elsewhere in the district.

We have already closed offices in Frinton and Harwich. If a resident needs a face-to-face consultation they will likely need to get to Clacton. Whilst there is no suggestion that TDC will

be re-opening district offices the opportunity now exists to work with strategic partners to create shared service locations in the towns with the larger population. This has already proven to work well in Harwich where we have staff members that deliver services (new claims by appointment, and change of circumstances by drop-in) two days a week from Jobcentre Plus in the High Street. They are seeing, on average, 20 people per day.

Telephony - Every team has one or two staff answering the telephone. Even if not a full time role they still have to have someone available to answer the phone or leave the department empty.

E-mail/letters – similar to Telephony in that a human interface is required to read the e-mail/letter and write a response.

Customer Service Delivery Vision

“Tendring District Council will deliver an excellent service to all of its customers, both internal and external, from all of its points of access and across multiple channels. Staff will be well trained and motivated, and excellence will be measured against key performance indicators”.

Clarification of terms

“Excellence” will be measured by a series of key performance indicators (KPIs). Internally a number of Service Level Agreements will be drawn up in association with Heads of Service.

These will be monitored on a monthly basis and discussed at regular meetings between the Head of Service and the Customer Service Manager.

External KPIs will include:

- Telephone call abandonment rates
- Telephone queuing time
- Number of queries resolved at first point of contact
- Customer satisfaction feedback forms
- Queuing time in the Customer Service Centre
- Online form completion rates and 1 page bounce rates

“Access points” refers to all locations across the Tendring district where the Council will offer a service to its residents and any external customers. This includes those locations where the Council uses a partners premises to conduct business but does not include Pay Points situated in various Post Offices and Newsagents around the district.

“Multiple channels” refers to the method in which a resident chooses to contact the Council. This could be face-to-face, by telephone, by post, by email or online through the TDC website or Social Media.

“Training” refers to an ongoing programme that all customer-facing staff will undertake, delivered by both internal and external resources, and which may lead to a Customer Service qualification. The goal will be to deliver a similar standard of customer service no matter what access point or channel is used.

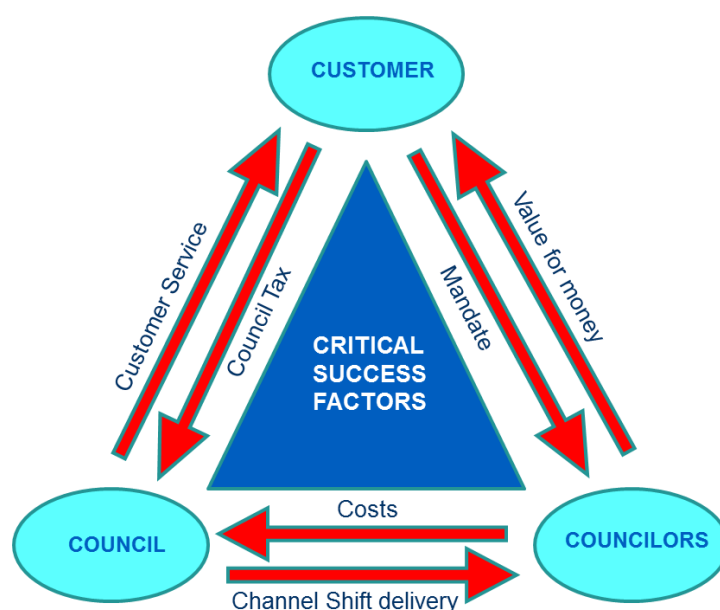
Customer Service Delivery Strategy Statement

“Tendring District Council will utilise research and customer feedback in order to define exactly the delivery methods required to ensure efficient and cost effective services for its residents. All customer-facing staff will be trained in order that these goals can be achieved. Performance will be measured and resources used to ensure this is possible, and goals will be re-addressed if found to be appropriate”.

Strategy Paradox

Paradox - How can we deliver a better service with fewer resources? When designing the strategy there was an understanding that it would need to be a mix of prescriptive and emergent strategies; that is, those that can be planned and implemented now and those that will depend on external factors that can be planned but not implemented at this point in time.

We will look to adopt a commercial model throughout to ensure residents get value for money. Rather than large up front budget lines, the service will operate on savings already banked and future efficiencies that give seed money for further improvements.



The diagram shows how a commercial model can be adapted for use in a Local Authority setting and depends on the relationship between the three drivers. The Customers (residents) elect the Councillors and pay Council Tax. In return the Councillors drive down costs and deliver value for money. The Officers at the Council innovate (channel shift) and deliver a better customer experience to the residents.

Research

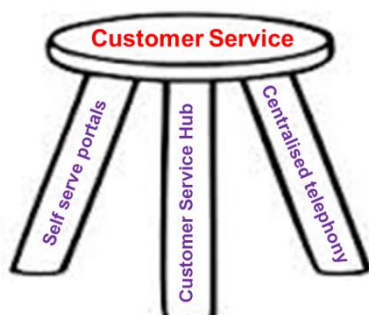
The research used to inform this strategy paralleled/mirrored that used to create the Channel Shift Strategy. The full report is available as an appendix but we were able to find out what transactions our customers did with us, what channels they used, and how long each transaction took. We were also able to compare with previous years when similar surveys were undertaken.

	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

As is evident from these figures channel shift is already occurring as residents move from more costly interfaces to lower cost self service contacts. The local town councils also took part in this research and we were able to understand how many transactions they were doing on our behalf i.e. distribution of recycling bins.

Customer Service Delivery Strategy



There will be three central delivery themes to the strategy and rather like a three legged stool we will need all of the delivery models to be in place in order to deliver excellent customer service.

Our activities can be sub-divided into three timeframes (horizons).

1. What we are doing now – Centralising administrative type duties, Channel Shifting in a piecemeal fashion, answering calls in every department on an old telephony system with variable levels of customer service delivered. But we are doing this as cheaply as we can.
2. Emerging activities –
 - We will create a customer service hub in our offices in Pier Avenue.
 - We will centralise all incoming telephone calls into the Contact Centre and install a new telephony platform.
 - We will create partnerships that allow us to utilise office space throughout the district where we will install self-service kiosks that may be accompanied by a customer service representative to help those less able to self-serve.

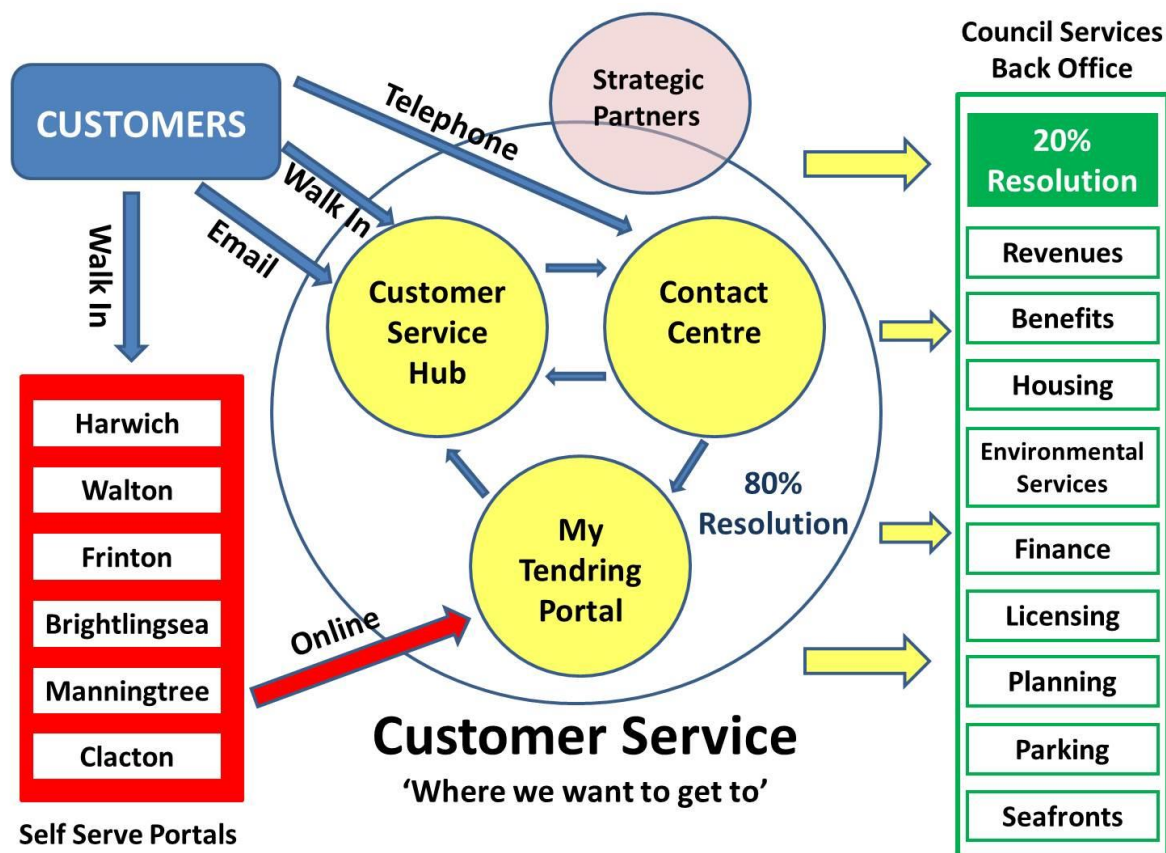
- We will create a 'My Tending' online portal as a central repository of all information known about residents (CRM).
 - We will centralise all outgoing post and, where possible, channel shift this towards digital options such as email.
3. Possibilities – remain open to ideas, inputs and suggestions which are likely to be around shared services and partnerships. Bank any cost savings.

Customer Service Delivery Model

Below is a graphic representation of the suggested customer service delivery model. Face-to-Face Customer Service will be delivered, for the most part, via a customer service hub in Pier Avenue, Clacton, that people can either visit or telephone. For those more able to utilize new technology all services can be delivered via a self serve portal ("My Tending"). A Customer Service Team will be created utilising existing resources within departments around TDC through the centralisation process. A training programme will be rolled out across TDC to include those with internal only customers i.e. I.T. and Human Resources.

The Contact Centre will utilise a new telephony platform (Mitel) in order to use skills based routing of calls. All incoming calls, except for those dialed to specific extensions, and generic emails will be routed through to this Contact Centre creating resource efficiencies.

N.B. It is possible that this could be expanded into commercial model for sale externally.



A series of internal informal and non bureaucratic Service Level Agreements will be drawn up between the Customer Service team and other back office services in order to drive quality and resolution levels. The aim will be to get 80% of all transactions completed at first point of contact freeing up valuable resources for the more complex 20% of cases.

The creation of the Customer Service hub offers the opportunity for partnership working (such as with the DWP, Social Services, Voluntary services) so that more rounded solutions can be offered out of a single location, particularly in the case of residents in crises. They are more likely to need the services of more than one organisation. Longer term it is hoped that there would be shared arrangements in place with Essex County Council (ECC) for some of their more transactional services, such as registrars and highways.

The self-serve portals are already being trialed with success in the reception area of the Pier Avenue offices. They are being supported by either staff from the Benefits team or from the Contact Centre, but they are already creating efficiency where we help residents to access services online. Further district wide access points will be realised via partnership agreements in the following locations:

Harwich – DWP JCP
Walton – ECC Library
Brightlingsea – Town Council Offices
Manningtree – ECC Library.
Frinton – either Town Council Offices or ECC Library.

The online 'My Tendring' portal will offer residents access to all transactional services that TDC offers. These services may need to be added via an iterative process, but ultimately the portal will offer a centralised repository of all information known about residents (CRM) which can be accessed by customers at any time and from any location with a connection via mobile, tablet or laptop. This portal will also be the method that TDC officers use to view customer records and will also be used to gather alternative customer contact information, such as email and text.

The centralising of all incoming and outgoing post within the Print Unit is another important aspect of providing consistent and efficient services. Where possible all incoming mail will be collated, scanned, and emailed to the intended recipients, cutting down courier trips, work in the back office, and filing space. All outgoing post will be sent to the Print Unit for mailing where it will be determined if the items can be sent electronically or not.

Strategy risks

Although Local Authorities are typically risk-averse there will always be some risks even with conservative strategies.

There is the risk that as we push towards more cost effective services delivered digitally we could exclude the vulnerable and less able residents. This model still allows face-to-face or telephone interactions and will in effect free up resources to enable those residents who do have greater difficulty with their interface with the Council to have more direct intervention and assistance. It is envisaged that at the outset the self-serve portals in the district would also be accompanied by customer service representatives at specific times of the week who

would be available for either drop-in or timed appointments. This is dependent on the creation of the Customer Service team and support from other back office resources.

The funding to enable the creation of a Customer Service Centre will become available through the rationalisation of other TDC assets and so it is essential that this strategy runs alongside the asset review strategy and various human resource initiatives. There will be a lag between savings being made via channel shift strategies and so it is essential that initiatives are forward funded so as to bring about longer term efficiency gains. A SOCITM survey in 2013 suggested that, on average, face-to-face transactions cost Local Authorities £8.62 each, telephone transactions cost £2.38 and web based services cost just 15p each. This strategy model offers future flexibility such as the reduction of opening times to create cost savings.

There is a cultural shift from the transactional culture that staff and customers have been used to, to an outcomes based culture where service delivery is the most important factor. There is a risk that some staff do not see themselves as offering customer service and become disenfranchised. The roll-out of a corporate wide customer service training programme should overcome this. All appropriate staff, including those with only internal customers, will undertake the programme. This could lead to qualifications, will certainly lead to increased knowledge and more diverse roles, and should be motivating. Above all communication to the affected staff will be key to the success of this cultural shift.

The aim of this strategy is to bring about a more business focused approach to customer service which will deliver improved customer service for all residents and generate cost savings. It will work in tandem with other significant rationalisations across the Council, including the rationalisation of assets and it is via this multi-strand approach that cost benefits will be achieved.

Appendix

1. Snapshot in time report 2014