CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2012-2014

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>Dawn Melloy</td>
<td>Head of Strategic Services</td>
<td>Review and input</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Dawn Melloy</td>
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<td>13.2</td>
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<td>14.1</td>
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<td>Customer Centric Services Manager</td>
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Revision History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date Updated</th>
<th>Revision Author</th>
<th>Summary of Major Changes Made</th>
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<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Dawn Melloy</td>
<td>Head of Strategic Services</td>
<td>Clarification of roles</td>
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<td>Fran Rodway</td>
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<td>14.1</td>
<td>Fran Rodway</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager</td>
<td>Minor wording changes</td>
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Part 1 - Introduction

Chesterfield Borough 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 customer service provision, and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

This Customer Service Strategy sets out the Council’s vision for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. It explains how the Council will meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the customer.

Customers receive a high standard of customer service from many public and private sector organisations. However, citizens sometimes have low expectations of services provided by local government, and it will be necessary to exceed rather than meet these expectations to achieve channel shift to better value 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, Chesterfield Borough 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 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.

The public sector must however also meet the needs of people who do not (yet) have access to the internet. ‘Digital Inclusion’ therefore is a core element of any government/public sector customer service strategy.

**KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

**The need for insight**
The process of developing and implementing a customer service strategy needs to be guided by insight, meaning on understanding of customer behaviours, experiences and attitudes, and insight specifically relating to:

- The customer
- 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 or need to be used in future
- Other organisation-specific micro/macro factors that may have an impact on service provision and delivery
- Customer interaction activity, including complaints, comments, compliments, Ombudsman enquiries and Freedom of Information requests

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.

**Organisational challenge**
In considering a customer service strategy, there is often a considerable challenge and change to existing organisational structures. The customer service 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 super-imposed or retro-fitted onto existing practices and as such is likely to require or precipitate considerable organisational change.

We 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 local level, an integrated customer service strategy is required that takes into account the varied ways in which local people may want to interact with the council, as well as the multi faceted role played by the Council within the community.
Part 2 – Basic Principles & Scope

PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

To outline the broad principles for the ways in which Chesterfield Borough 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 citizen in mind.

SCOPE

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

   Contact channels in scope include:

   - Face to face
   - Email
   - Internet (including internet kiosks, partner and commercial websites)
   - Telephone
   - Mobile technology (including SMS text messaging, apps and mobile web)
   - Automated telephone technology
   - Post

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

   - **Transactions** (e.g. 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 citizens’ individual needs and preferences in a non-discriminatory way.

CHANNELS HIERARCHY & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The choice of contact channels available to the public is growing all of the time as new technologies are developed and released. For example in the last 5 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 strategy many organisations typically adopt one of two approaches to using these channels by either 1) launching all of their products and services on all new channels without much thought to the relevance and cost of doing so or 2) focusing on switching their customer contact to the cheapest channel (often assumed to be the internet) without much thought as to the relevance of this channel to their entire customer base.

There is however a generally accepted model for the effectiveness of the major channels of contact available today as shown below.

What this model shows is that as we move up the triangle the cost of delivery typically gets cheaper for the organisation. However for some types of contact a greater level of human contact is required, particularly for contacts that require some level of reassurance.

It is 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.

Consideration also needs to be given to user groups. There is little hope of shifting the channels that a certain group uses if that group simply doesn’t access that channel. For example, internet penetration is currently very low amongst the jobless, the financially excluded, older people and people who do not read or speak English. Therefore, it may not be a good use of corporate time, and taxpayer’s money, to attempt to shift these contacts online. Conversely, mobile telephone penetration is very high amongst teenagers, so SMS messaging might be a good channel to advise of last minute 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 develop over years and sometimes months, creating a continually changing landscape.

The key factors to an effective strategy for channel shift therefore would be:

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

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

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

4. **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 organisation's preferred method of contact.

5. **Cost effectiveness** – particularly in the current economic climate, finding ways in which to deliver services effectively but at lower cost will be increasingly important.
Part 3 – Chesterfield Borough Council’s Strategies for Channel Shift

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Council provides a range of different locations where customers can access our services. These include:

- The Town Hall
- Staveley Neighbourhood Office
- Revenues Hall
- Tourist Information Centre
- Stonegravels Depot
- Housing Solutions Centre
- Leisure Centres
- Cultural venues including the Museum

Details of the Council’s current customer access points and the services available are shown in Appendix 1.

These locations are essentially managed locally by the relevant service department and there is an inevitable inconsistency of approach to the level and form of customer service. This includes opening times, corporate logos/uniform, telephone answering, waiting times, electronic transactions and access etc.

The partnership with *arvato Public Sector Services* includes the delivery of certain front line services such as Council Tax and Benefits Administration, the Telephone Contact Centre, Town Hall Reception and Revenue Collection Services. Agreed performance indicators and methods of measurement have been agreed and a corporate approach has been established by the provider to delivering those particular services. There is a commitment to redevelop the Revenues Hall by March 2013 and this will be informed by the requirements laid out in the Customer Services Strategy.

Emerging technologies have improved the Council’s ability to provide its services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the Internet and the Council’s website. However there is still a way to go. Customers can request some services on the website via e-forms (an online version of a paper form) at any time. Where this is available it provides our customers with greater choice and also saves them and us time and money in travelling.

In 2010-11 the Council’s Call Centre dealt with 157,714 telephone calls for Revenues and Benefits, SpirePride, Environment and Waste management services, the election office and general enquiries. From September 2011 housing repairs calls are also taken through the Call Centre.

There were 311,316 cashiering transactions in the Revenues Hall (247,639) and Staveley Neighbourhood Office (63,677). A further 19,136 payments were taken via the automated telephone payments line and 34,538 payments were made using the internet payments...
facility on the Council’s website (including those taken by the call centre). 12,238 rent transactions were processed via Allpay.

OVERARCHING CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

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

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

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

OWNERSHIP OF CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL’S CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

Chesterfield Borough Council’s Customer Service Strategy and its implementation will be the responsibility of the Executive Member for Customer and Community Services and the Head of Business Transformation.

The Customer Centric Services Manager will have day to day responsibility for achieving the aims of this strategy working closely with CBC Service Heads and the Support Services Manager.

REVIEW PERIOD OF CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL’S CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

Chesterfield Borough Council will treat this strategy as “business as usual” with a view to constantly evolving the strategy.

The delivery mechanism will be a fully and properly resourced time critical work programme which will be developed following adoption of the strategy.

The work programme will include links to the Council’s corporate plan.

A formal review of the delivery model will take place in October of each year subsequent to the strategy’s initial publication.

GOVERNANCE OF CUSTOMER CONTACT CHANNELS AT CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
Work is required to simplify the governance of the various contact channels that the Council operates.

The basic principle underpinning this strategy is that, wherever possible, we will deliver services from centralised locations or locations agreed corporately as most appropriate to the nature and objectives of the service.

The existing Revenues Hall will be developed into a central Customer Service Centre (CSC) offering face-to-face access for all Council services in a modern, comfortable and welcoming environment.

All services will work with Customer Services to ensure that, wherever possible, the CSC will act as the central hub for customer engagement. The only exceptions to this will be where there is a strong business case, agreed corporately by the Council, which concludes that the customer would be better served by seeing a service specialist at a different location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Current/Present Delivery Manager</th>
<th>Recommended Delivery Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone/Contact Centre</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Content</td>
<td>Service contacts</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email – Generic</td>
<td>CBC Administration Manager</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters – Generic</td>
<td>CBC Administration Manager</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Service contacts</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face</td>
<td>Service contacts</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato) or Service Managers as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Telephone</td>
<td>Service contacts</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific issues regarding contact are allocated as follows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Delivery Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidable Contact (NI14)</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel Shift</td>
<td>Customer Centric Services Manager (arvato)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE AVOIDABLE CONTACT STRATEGY

“To reduce the need for our customers to contact us by reducing bureaucracy, automating processes and working with partners to provide ‘joined up’ services.”

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

The customer experience for both citizens and business 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.

Chesterfield Borough Council will work with its services and partners to design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact with the public sector multiple times to complete one transaction. For example notifying a change of address once, rather than contacting multiple agencies, paying for rent by direct debit instead of by cash or chasing up progress on a reported incident or fault.

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 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 the overall customer service strategy and, implemented well, it can lower costs, build reputation, empower the citizen and improve the overall service proposition.

Shifting customers to particular channels involves behaviour change on the citizen’s part, but once they are aware of the channels available, they will use the one that works best for them.

Chesterfield Borough Council will encourage residents to shift to new and more effective channels.
‘ACCESSIBILITY OF CONTACT’ STRATEGY

“To provide a range of contact channels for each service, 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 citizen may experience whilst using different electronic access channels to obtain services from the Council. 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.

Part 4 – Strategies for Specific Channels

TELEPHONE STRATEGY

“To minimise the number of contact numbers published, to provide fast access to an informed officer and to reduce the amount of low value calls that our customers have to make”.

Telephone contacts will be analysed to ensure that they are effective and add value to the transaction, interaction or enquiry.

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”

There is growing scope for using text messaging to communicate with many contact groups and this will be fully investigated and utilised.

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”

It is the aim of this strategy to make contacting the Council straightforward for everyone. We will encourage customers and residents to use the website as the principal access point for simple information and transactional services, making it the channel of choice and promoting channel shift.

The specific needs and preferences of customers will be taken into consideration.
FACE TO FACE STRATEGY

“To provide Face to Face services through a centralised Customer Contact Centre where appropriate by fully trained officers”.

The Customer Contact Centre will seek opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations. Existing practices will be reviewed to identify potential channel shift and quality improvements, including assisted access to the Council’s digital services by customer services staff.

POST/PAPER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

“To reduce the amount of post and paper communication by better use of electronic channels”.

This will be achieved by reviewing the range of services provided across the Council, implementing online forms, as appropriate, and alternative delivery methods, reducing printing and postage costs.

Wherever appropriate, information will be made available electronically, by preference.

EMAIL STRATEGY

“To reduce the amount of email communication by better use of electronic forms and other electronic channels.”

Although emails are more cost effective than traditional postal communications, digital communications can be refined further to make them even more attractive for customers and services, if integration can be developed.

NEW MEDIA STRATEGY (INCLUDING EMERGING SOCIAL MEDIA)

“Learn from other users of new and emerging media and implement cost effective and tested new channels”.

We will review emerging media channels and develop a social media strategy maximising any benefits which may accrue.
Part 4 – Glossary of Terms

Customer
A person using a public service. The person could be using the service for personal reasons (e.g. accessing benefits), for business reasons (e.g. registering for services) and 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.

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, digital television, kiosks and face-to-face reception points.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Current Service Provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>REGENERATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Planning:</td>
<td>• Face to face contact through separate reception point. Area has space for small exhibitions and access to PC for on-line viewing of plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Planning Portal is a link on the web site to a government site and has a good level of information about making planning applications which may be made on-line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local information about larger regeneration sites and links to other business sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building Control has direct telephone contact and drop-in for customers at Dunston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Cultural Venues:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• On-line booking of tickets for Theatre and Winding Wheel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Telephone booking through box office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drop in to TIC and booking office to purchase tickets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) TIC:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Publicity for events and venues, information about buses etc. available on line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drop in facility for visitors and direct telephone calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Car parking</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Payment of fines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Economic development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Service requirements not yet defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Telephone enquiries go through CCS Call Centre initially via scripts. Some calls referred back to specialists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Payments may be made through CCS Call Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Separate reception area in Town Hall manage:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‒ Face to face requests for bulky household processing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (i) Waste Removal | waste removal,  
|                  | - Issue of gold cards,  
|                  | - Sale of refuse/recycling sacks,  
|                  | - Payment for return of stray dogs.  
|                  | - Face to face requests for new bins (moving in/out).  
| (ii) Leisure | • Bookings done by telephone directly to sports centres or drop-in.  
|             | • Sales of membership is done by hard copy application form obtained from Sports Centre Recections.  
|             | • Virtual tours available on line.  
|             | • Some information e.g. policy, promotions, opening times, activities available are on web site.  
|             | • Site for HLC very different from QP.  
| (iii) Licensing | • Face-to face at separate Reception in Town Hall.  
| HOUSING | • Housing Repairs may be reported through an on-line form, by telephone to the hotline number or drop-in at the depot.  
|          | • Rent collection: payment may be made on-line, telephone call to Call Centre and cash payment through Revenues Hall.  
|          | • Homelessness drop-in already located in Revenues Hall.  
|          | • Sign-ups for tenancy agreements located in CSC but managed in Housing (20-25 per week.  
|          | • Careline has dedicated call centre at Wensley Way.  
|          | • Staveley Office open for drop-in.  
|          | • Choice Based Lettings: managed through separate office in New Square includes sign up. Application form can be down loaded but not completed on-line.  
| GOVERNANCE SERVICE | • Land charges and personal searches can be
| **ACCOUNTANCY** | • Accountancy has relatively few external customers.  
• Financial documents are published on the web-site currently.  
• Tenants Contents Insurance claim form currently completed in hard copy.  
• Insurances for properties done in hard copy. |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION** | • Transactions with the public are limited. Access tends to be through direct dial telephony.  
• Currently retained support services provide customer facing administration and reception e.g. planning and environmental administration. |