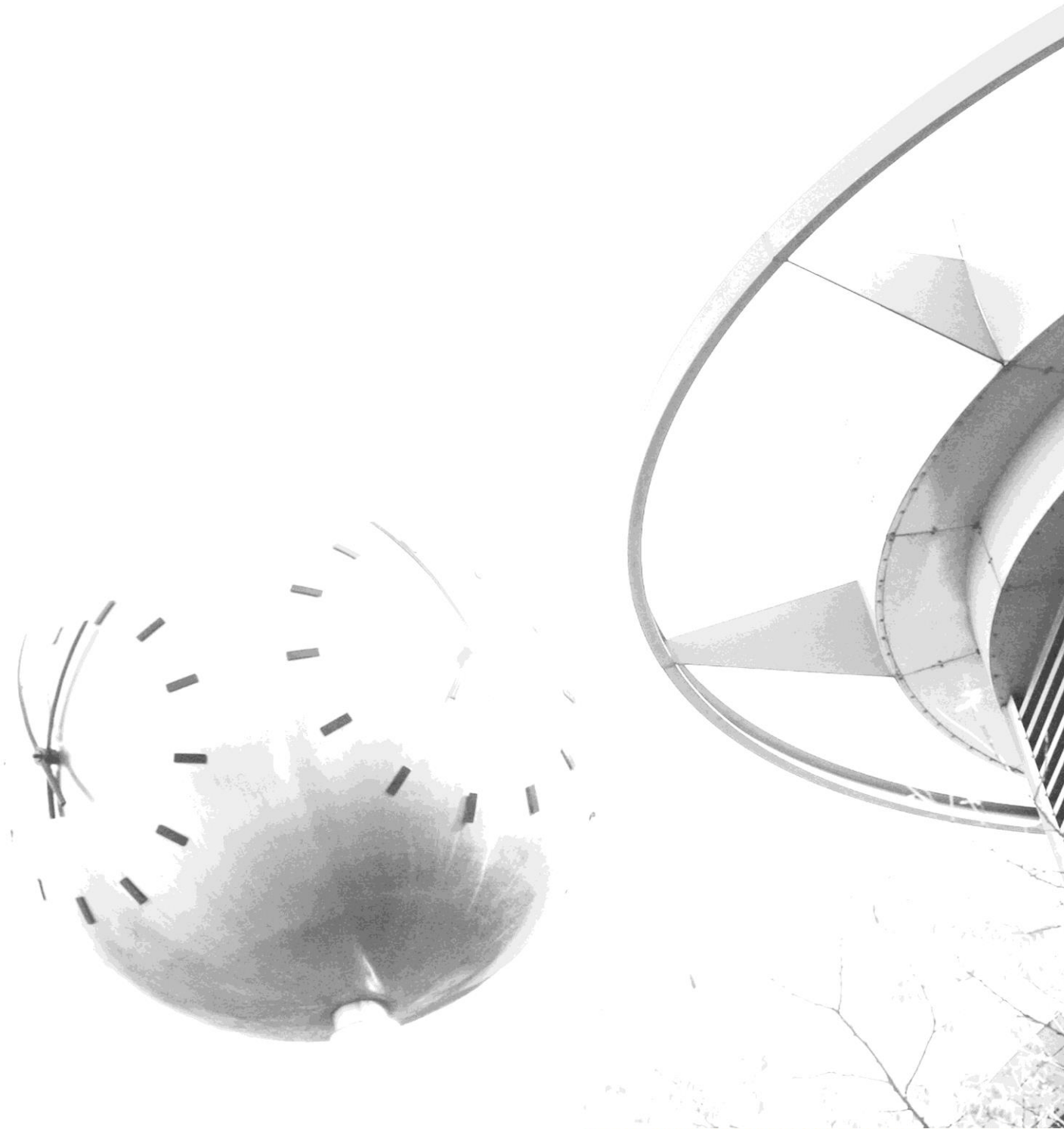


Customer Policy



Key Information

Author:	Customer Services
Section/Directorate:	Corporate Resources
Service Impact Assessment:	December 2018
External Consultation:	Residents and Customers Key Partners (including DWP, Job Centre, Citizens Advice, Essex County Council, Probation services (ECRC))
Internal Consultation:	Service managers across the organisation
Background Information:	None
Policy Approval – Officer Level	Corporate Director December 2018
Policy Approval – Member Level	Corporate Resources Committee January 2019
Policy Review Date:	January 2024
Service Impact Assessment Review Date:	January 2024

Content

Page/s

1. **Foreword and/or Introduction**
2. **Policy Statement / Vision**
3. **Key Customer Principles**
4. **Context**
 - National
 - Local
 - Council Priorities
5. **Outcomes**
6. **Monitoring**
7. **Links to other Corporate Policies and Partner Documents**
8. **Appendix 1 – Customer Charter**

1. Introduction

Our Customer Policy is an essential part of delivering our ambitions and promises detailed within the Councils Corporate Plan. This Policy will provide the framework to ensure that we keep putting our customers at the heart of everything we do.

This Policy sets the direction of the Council in how it engages, supports and works to support our customers, partners and each other.

2. Policy Statement / Vision

“Supporting our customers, partners and each other in a way that is simple, effective, and welcoming”

3. Key Customer Principles

This Policy is centred on the following key principles, where we seek to:

- 1) Put the customer at the heart of everything we do;
- 2) Make contact with the Council as simple and straightforward as possible;
- 3) Aim to resolve queries at the first point of contact;
- 4) Be transparent, clear and understandable in the language the Council uses;
- 5) Keep customers updated and informed;
- 6) Enable access to services at a time that suits the customer, through maximising the use of technology and ensuring it works for the customer's benefit;
- 7) Support vulnerable and disabled residents to access our services;
- 8) Use customers views to shape future service delivery;
- 9) Manage expectations, ensuring resources are directed where they can deliver most value for the community;
- 10) Work collaboratively with partners to provide good quality public sector customer service.

The Council has developed a customer charter, based on these principles, which sets out our promises to our customers. This is attached at Appendix A.

The Council wants to ensure that:

- Services are designed around the needs of the customer;
- Services are easy to access;
- Services are joined up, where they are delivered with other partners;
- Queries are addressed at first point of contact;
- Customers have a positive experience.

The Council will achieve this by:

Making it Happen - this reflects our commitment to ensure that customer's queries are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible, taking due care and attention.

- Providing live updates on the progress of resolving customer queries
- Implementing technology to better understand demand and customer needs
- Ensuring our customer services are effective, welcoming and deliver value for money
- Working with volunteering groups to support vulnerable and disabled residents accessing services

Making it Easy - This reflects our commitment to making services simple, accessible and intuitive.

- Working with partners and other public sector organisations to provide seamless service provision
- Providing access to the Council through a Customer App
- Having a modern & intuitive website
- Providing training opportunities to residents on digital and other skills
- Providing effective tools to assist Councillors with their roles as community leaders

Making it Better - This reflects our commitment to listen to local people and work with them using customer insight to shape future services and to continually improve our ways of working.

- Hosting community events to support service development and build civic pride
- Maximising the use of digital channels e.g. Social Media as a way to engage and empower residents
- Using customer focus groups to engage with residents and improve services
- Reviewing processes to ensure they meet customer needs and sharing performance
- Ensuring that Customer Services provides wider social value in supporting corporate and community initiatives

4. Context

This Policy applies to all customers of the Council and aims to respond to changes in customer expectations, behavior and demand, and deliver a consistent positive customer experience. It also aims to provide value for money services that make the best use of our shrinking resources.

Local – Since the approval of the previous Customer Strategy in 2012, the Council has seen customer needs evolve and an increase in demand for services. There has also been a change in customer behaviour in how and when they contact us. In addition, business requirements have changed and technology has advanced. The Council wants to embrace these advancements and changes and, as such, to refresh its customer policy.

National – Local government continues to face unprecedented financial challenges and in response, the way in which the Council provides services to its community must continue to transform and adapt. The role of the Council is changing from one of doing things for people, to one of support and as an enabler to assist them

in doing more things for themselves. The Council must work together with its partners and local people to create the right environment to support this and ensure that the customer experience is a positive one. The Council recognises the challenges this presents and wishes to reflect these in its refreshed policy.

Council Promises

This policy has a significant impact on the four council promises and is integral to meeting the ambitions set out within the Council Corporate Plan.

Corporate Promises	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
1.A place where people are happy, healthy and active	/			
2.An attractive and welcoming place that people are proud to call home	/			
3. A place that encourages business to grow and residents to succeed	/			
4. A council fit for purpose and able to deliver	/			

5. Outcomes

The high level strategic outcomes sort from this Policy include:

- Positive customer experience
- Channel Shift – supporting the move to online access
- Improved customer engagement
- Greater collaboration across the public sector and opportunity for shared services
- Ensuring value for money & delivering business efficiencies
- Enhanced customer insight to drive service improvements and inform decision making
- Customers to be supported and enabled to self-serve
- Embedding customer service across the organisation, treating people fairly and consistently
- Effective use of technology to deliver digital transformation

6. Monitoring

The Council will maintain a basket of performance indicators and measures that will enable the achievement and progress in delivering the Outcomes detailed within this Policy to be effectively monitored.

7. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

- The Corporate Plan
- Digital strategy
- Medium Term Financial Strategy

OUR CUSTOMER CHARTER

Our Promise to Make it Happen

- We will listen to you and value your opinion
- We will treat you with dignity and respect
- We will be open, fair and honest
- We will treat your information with care and respect your privacy

Our Promise to Make it Easy

- We will make our services easy to use and accessible to all
- We will provide clear and simple ways for you to engage with us
- We will support you to use our services

Our Promise to Make it Better

- We will continue to learn so that we grow and improve
- We will involve you in the planning and delivery of our customer services
- We will explain outcomes and decisions clearly

We will put you at the heart of what we do



IN RETURN, WE ASK THAT YOU
Treat our staff with respect
Be on time for any appointments
Tell us when something changes

Monday to Friday
10am to 5pm



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