



HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Customer Service Strategy

*“ Working with you, for you,
improving our communities, our places”*

2018-2023

Hertsmere Borough Council aims to provide information in alternative formats where possible.

If you would like a document in a different language or format please call 020 8207 7445 or email customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk and we will do our best to help.

Please allow sufficient time for any document to be translated.

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إذا اردت أي وثيقة بلغة أو بصيغة أخرى يرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف 020 8207 7445 أو إرسال بريد الكتروني customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk وسنبذل قصارى جهدنا لمساعدتك. يرجى منحنا وقتاً كافياً لترجمة أي وثيقة مطلوبة.

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Jeżeli ktoś chciałby otrzymać dokument w innym języku lub formacie proszony jest zatelefonować na numer 020 8207 7445 lub przesłać e-mail do customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk a my zrobimy wszystko by pomóc. Prosimy uwzględnić czas na przetłumaczenie każdego dokumentu.

ਹਰਟਸਮੀਅਰ ਬੋਰੋ ਕੌਂਸਿਲ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਵੀ ਹੋ ਸਕੇ, ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ, ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਨੰਬਰ 020 8207 7445 'ਤ ਫ਼ਨ ਕਰ, ਜਾਂ ਇਸ ਪਤ customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk 'ਤ ਈਮੇਲ ਭੇਜੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਹ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖੋ ਕਿ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਹੋਣ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਝ ਸਮਾਂ ਲਗਦਾ ਹੈ।

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1. Executive Summary

Hertsmere Borough Council Our Customer Care Standards

Equal Access

- We will continue to ensure that all customers have access to our services and we will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation

When we receive letters and emails

We will continue to;

- aim to respond, or let you know how we are dealing with the matter, within ten working days for letters and emails. If we cannot fully respond within 10 working days we will keep you updated every 5 working days thereafter.
- write in a way that is easy to understand and use languages other than English when appropriate.
- arrange for audio file or large print when requested, and advertise widely the facts that alternative formats are available if people ask for them.
- give you the name of the person or section to contact and provide contact details.

Customers waiting for a service or response

- We will continue to advise you about when you can expect to receive the service you have requested and keep you informed of any changes to this.

When we answer the telephone

We will continue to

- answer within 20 seconds.
- greet you with a courteous manner, giving our name and section.
- arrange to call back or write to you if an immediate response is not possible. This contact will be made in an accessible way to meet your needs.
- only transfer a call if we are sure who to transfer the call to. Otherwise we will arrange to call you back.
- call you back within 1 working day, if you leave a message on an answer phone.

When we visit your home or business

We will continue to

- make appointments wherever possible. We will identify ourselves as Council employees with a name badge, or official documentation or agreed password if appropriate. When we arrive, we will explain who we are and the purpose of our visit.
- be polite, friendly, and conduct our business efficiently.
- let you know what will happen next as a result of our visit.

Reception areas

- We aim not to let you wait any longer than 15 minutes but, if necessary, we will keep you informed about any delay.

Our reception areas will continue to:

- be clearly sign posted;
- have helpful and welcoming staff
- be accessible, clean and tidy;
- clearly display information about other relevant services and how to contact them
- have a free phone in main reception areas to allow you to contact other Council Offices;
- have information about Council services in different languages, where appropriate
- offer interpreters and ensure they are available if booked in advance;
- preserve confidentiality where requested, and advertise this fact widely so that you know you can ask for this to be done; and
- cater for the needs of visiting children and babies as far as possible

Feedback

We welcome your feedback and will respond to any feedback including complaints fairly and quickly. Our feedback system enables you to make a comment, complaint or compliment (3Cs) by telephone, letter, email, in person or via our website (www.Hertsmere.gov.uk)

2. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to;

- show to our residents the standards of customer care they should expect.
- show our staff the levels of customer care expected of them
- define ways in which we can improve

This will be demonstrated by;

- continuing to provide convenient, timely and efficient access to information and services for our customers across a range of delivery channels most relevant to them.
- re-introducing Customer Care Standards across the authority and measuring our performance against these, to make improvements and adjustments where necessary.

3. Statement of Policy

We are committed to being a customer friendly organisation and believe that the people who work in, live in or visit Hertsmere should expect high quality service.

The aim of the Customer Service Team and Strategy is to continue to deliver quality services that people need, and continuously improve them. We also aim to develop and maintain effective partnerships locally and nationally.

The Council recognises the importance of reviewing its strategies, policies and practices to ensure that they continue to reflect the Council's vision, corporate goals, and key objectives.

This Customer Service Strategy has been developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders, including Councillors, employees, senior officers, feedback from external assessment processes, and community engagement (surveys and events).

We recognise that it is not only our targets that are important but also the quality of every interaction with the Council, customers being able to resolve an enquiry at the first point of contact and the Council keeping its promises that are important to our customers.

4. Legislative Framework

Data Protection

Hertsmere Borough Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 which came into force on the 25 May 2018. The Act sets out rules for processing personal information (known as personal data) and applies to all personal data that is processed automatically, any personal data held in a manual form in a relevant filing system and any personal data held in an accessible record.

The Council will therefore follow procedures that aim to ensure that all employees, elected members, contractors, agents, consultants, partners or other servants of the council who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the Council, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 came into effect on 1 January 2005. The Act gives a statutory right of access to all information held by public authorities subject to some exemptions.

The Act is designed to make public bodies, more open, accessible and accountable and impacts on the way that this, and every Council responds to information.

For more information about either of these acts please contact our Information Officer.

5. Definitions

To aid the understanding of this strategy and the provisions of relevant legislation, the following definitions are provided:

Definition 1 – Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Explanation – is a technology for managing interactions with customers

Definition 2 – Customer Service

Explanation – A series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction - that is, the feeling that the product or service has met the customer expectation.

Definition 3 - Risk

Explanation - A risk is anything that may impede the achievement of objectives. We recognise that the active management of risk must be built into every service that the Council provides.

6. The Principles of Customer Service

The Council is committed to delivering high quality services for all our customers. Employees of the Council want to deliver the best services they can. As an organisation we are increasingly judged by the quality of the services we can deliver- user feedback, audits, inspections, key performance indicators etc, are used with other methods to gauge the success or otherwise of how good a job we are doing.

We will follow these principles of customer service

- A Knowing who our customers are
- B Providing services that meet the customers' needs
- C Providing a friendly, courteous service
- D Being responsive to our customers' needs
- E Providing information in a way customers understand
- F Doing everything we can do to help
- G Responding positively to comments and complaints
- H Treating everyone fairly, equally and with respect

7. Data Quality

Hertsmere Borough Council is committed to the very highest levels of data accuracy. This includes data used internally for management decision-making, and data reported externally on the performance of the Council and its services.

In order to meet its commitments to data quality, the Council will ensure that:

- Data quality is owned and understood across the organisation
- The appropriate level of resources are invested in data quality in order to meet the Council's data quality commitments
- Robust quality control procedures are in place
- Independent external audits of data are reported internally and externally, and that improvement actions are acted upon in order to continuously improve the Council's approach

8. Partnership Working

At Government and at a local level, partnerships are a way of achieving better and more integrated services.

Increasingly, many of the Council's services are delivered in partnership with others. Forming and maintaining partnerships can never be an end in itself; and the Council is committed to partnership working and to ensuring our partnerships deliver real benefits and bring added value.

9. Customer Service

We want to put all of our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.

Customers contact us in many ways: telephone, online, face to face, email and post, depending on their needs and the service they want to access. We are committed to providing services which are easy to use, simple and effective. For everyone using our services we want to be easy to deal with. We will also try to provide specific support where customer needs require us to provide services in a different way. In the last few years, more and more people prefer to access services on their mobile phone or computer as this is quicker and more convenient. If we make it easy for them to access our services in this way, we can focus our limited resources on customers who are unable to do it online themselves. Therefore we want to improve our online and digital services.

National research shows it typically costs Councils



£15

for each face to face transaction



£12

to deal with a letter



£7

to deal with an email



£5

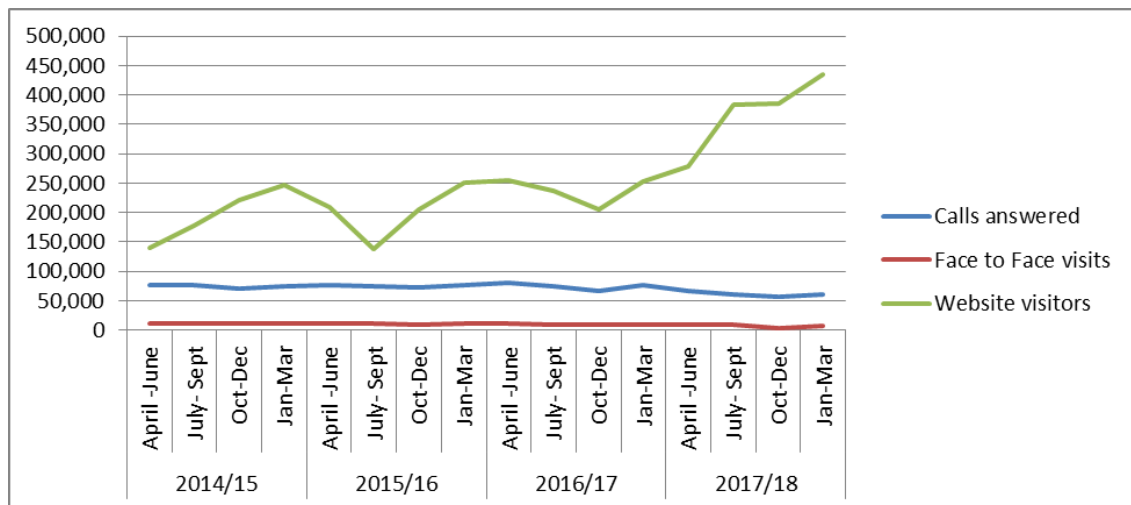
for each telephone call



£1

for each online transaction

The council deals with a large number of customer enquiries each year. The line chart below shows more customers are visiting our website every year.



Who are our customers?

We deal with a wide range of people and our customers include everyone living, working, volunteering, investing, studying, running a business in or visiting Hertsmere

Our customers contact us for many different reasons, including to:

- Get information from us, or give us information
- Apply for, book or arrange services
- Report issues
- Make payments
- Buy our services
- Access specific help and support.

The Customer Service Team is multi skilled to provide a one-stop enquiry service for customers of the Council. This involves customers calling in personally, contacting by phone, fax, email or other channels as appropriate. Our Area Offices are located in the Citizens Advice Bureau in Bushey and the Wyllyotts Centre in Potters Bar.

The Customer Service role involves following enquiries through to completion wherever possible and delivering the service to the best possible standards of customer care. This involves internal partnership with the service delivery teams.

All members of the team have either completed or undertakes an NVQ level 2 in Customer Services. The Customer Service Team also work in partnership with the NHS Partnership Foundation Trust and the Police, who share our offices at

the Civic Centre in Borehamwood and we extend our Customer Service to their employees and customers.

10. Service Plans

Service Plans are an integral part of the performance management framework for the Council. Translating our priority objectives into service delivery happens through the close relationship between the Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and the service planning process. Our Service planning process ensures that all services focus on what has to be done to deliver the improvements expected by the community, and link individual's performance to the corporate appraisal scheme.

This Customer Service Strategy has been developed in line with our Service plan and supports the action plan within it.

11. Customer Service Roles & Responsibilities

High standards of Customer Services are expected from everyone from our frontline staff to our council leader.

Executive

The Executive's role includes setting overall priorities for all key services. The Executive Member responsible for Customer Services will oversee this strategy.

Councillors

All councillors have a responsibility to ensure the Customer Services Strategy is followed. Any comments, compliments or complaints on service provision should be reported to the Customers Services Manager.

Director

The Director will liaise between the Councillors, Heads of Services and the Customer Services Team to ensure all parties are aware of their responsibilities in delivering high quality customer services to all. They have a responsibility to ensure all personnel in their Directorate are delivering to the standards of the strategy.

Heads of Service

The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services has the overall responsibility of the Customer Service Team. All Heads of Service will communicate this strategy with their departments to promote the Customer Services Standards. They have a responsibility to ensure all personnel in their service area deliver to the standards of the strategy.

Employees

All employees and partners are expected to represent the council regardless of rank, role or responsibility. This means they are expected to follow the Customer Service Standards at all times and be available to customers during our opening hours.

The Customer Services Team's role is to ensure everyone is aware of and understands this strategy. The team will monitor any complaints, compliments and comments to improve the service to all customers.

12. Equalities and Diversity

The Council has legal responsibilities to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities through a range of national and European legislation. The Equality and Diversity Policy and Diversity Scheme set out how the Council intends to meet its general and specific duties.

As a local employer, the Council also has a responsibility to ensure equal opportunities in employment. There are policies and procedures to support the effective implementation of the Equality and Diversity programme.

The Council has achieved level three of the national Equality Standard for local government accredited by the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA).

This involved external assessors from other authorities visiting the council. They considered the council's evidence and conducted interviews with staff, including our UNISON representative, councillors and partner organisations, and looked at how we integrate equality and diversity into all aspects of our work including service delivery and employment. Level three not only means that we ensure equality and diversity in all that we do, but that we also set and achieve our own equality and diversity objectives and targets.

We have completed an Equality Impact Assessment for this strategy to ensure we have considered the diverse needs of our community. This is available in Appendix A. We will continue to develop our understanding through customer engagement and our feedback procedure, focus groups and surveys, in line with our Community Engagement Strategy.

13. Social and Environmental impact

The Customer Service Team works in close partnership with Street Scene Services as we recognise a clean and healthy environment contributes to the quality of all our lives. Problems such as litter, dumped rubbish and pollution

can damage the environment in which we live, health, how safe we feel in our communities, and how willing businesses are to invest in creating the jobs we need for the future. Hertsmere has achieved great success in these areas.

Good design and quality neighbourhoods have an impact on people's health and wellbeing as well as a feeling of belonging within the community. We are therefore committed to ensuring the quality of the built environment.

14. Risk Management

Customer Services has carried out risk assessments for the operation of the service in accordance with the Council's approved methodology. In preparing our Service Plan the following key risks have been identified:

- Technology failure
- Pandemics
- Recruitment and Retention
- Economic downturn increasing demand on Council Services
- Failure to provide sufficient training, information, instruction and supervision

These will be kept under review as part of normal management arrangements.

15. Implementation

This section sets out our three medium term objectives for the Customer Services Strategy.

The Customer Services Action Plan in Appendix B details how these objectives can be advanced and sets out how and when they will be delivered.

1. Better customer experience

- Customers understand what they can expect from us
- We are easy to deal with
- Aim to get it right first time, every time which reduces unnecessary multiple contact
- Simple, easy to understand policies and processes which are clear and encourage self-service
- Staff focused on providing good service and outcomes for customers
- End to end services designed from the customer perspective
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Improve the council's reputation as an organisation

- Increased trading / commercial opportunities
- Improve the experience of those visiting Hertsmere

2. Digital contact is the first choice for most customers

- Information is easy to find on the council's website
- A customer account to provide updated information to help people to be self-sufficient and independent
- Customers can apply for services, inform us of changes, request information and pay quickly and easily online
- Services are designed so customers can use their own devices, with no need to register or download additional software
- Customers can complete most tasks digitally from start to finish, without having to contact the council directly
- Support is available for those who need it to get online
- Customers are involved in the design of digital public services

3. Engagement with customers to influence design and delivery of services

- Listen to and learn from our diverse range of customers, with different backgrounds and perspectives, using a range of communications methods to engage and consult them
- Customer engagement will foster communities and individuals to help people become more independent
- Customer feedback and insight will help improve council services by influencing the design of policies, services, systems and processes
- Keep customers well informed about our services, and any changes or issues which may affect them
- Provide high quality information across a range of platforms

16. Evaluation

The Council recognises the importance of reviewing its strategies, policies and practices to ensure that they continue to reflect the Council's vision, corporate goals, and key objectives. The Customer Service Strategy will be reviewed every three years and updated no later than every five years to ensure it remains effective and takes account of changes in legislation and best practice.

17. Contact Details

Hertsmere Borough Council

Customer Services Operations Manager
Hertsmere Borough Council
Civic Offices
Elstree Way
Borehamwood
WD6 1WA

Phone: 020 8207 2277

Email: customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk

Opening Hours:

Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5.15pm
Friday, 9am to 5pm

Potters Bar Area Office

Wyllyotts Centre
Wyllyotts Place
Darkes Lane
Potters Bar
Herts, EN6 2HN
Phone: 01707 652 406
Open Tuesday 9:30-2pm

Bushey Area Office

Citizens Advice Bureau
8 Rudolph Road
Bushey
Herts, WD23 3DU
Phone: 020 8386 4048
Open Thursday 9:30-2pm

Website: www.hertsmere.gov.uk

Email: customer.services@hertsmere.gov.uk

Out of hours emergency phone number: 0845 300 0021

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