

Appendix 2

DRAFT CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY 2020 – 2025



The Council Priorities and the Vision



Your services

“Providing the best services



Supporting you

we can afford to help you



Your future

improve your life”

We will continue to deliver our priorities without it costing you more by:

- Offering an improved customer experience
- Building better relationships with other organisations and the community
- Providing more digital opportunities to make dealing with us easier
- Becoming smaller but more effective

OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE VISION

We aim to be a customer focused organisation – we’ll work to understand our customers better and put them at the heart of everything we do, and we’ll support customers to do more for themselves.

All our staff are encouraged to ‘think customer’ before acting. We invest in training for our staff to understand how to deliver great customer care.

We’re committed to treating people fairly, to respect privacy and dignity and to pay attention to people who need more support. We’ll make sure this continues to be an important part of our culture. We’ll ask customers what they think and use their feedback to improve our services.

Each year we deal with a wide range of enquiries and provide help and support for people across Arun. Expectations are growing, which means we must understand what customers need and use this to change our services.

Aims and objectives

We Will:

- ask for feedback from customers about their experiences of dealing with us. We'll learn from this and use it to improve
- develop online services that are easy to access using any device, quick to use and available whenever they are needed
- promote self-reliance; whilst continuing to support those who need our help
- talk to focus groups to understand and accommodate access needs
- measure how satisfied people are with our services, publish and learn from the results.

PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our key challenges include:

Rising customer expectations and demands – customers expect to be able to contact us 24 hours a day, seven days a week using our website and social media. They expect flexible and more personalised services.

Using customer intelligence to inform and shape service delivery – we'll use good information to understand what our customers need so that we can respond better.

Digital exclusion – some people don't have access to the internet at home, and that may mean that they can't find our information and services online. We'll help people who don't have access to the internet at home by providing equipment and support to use at venues across the District.

Reducing council resources – the need for us to provide high quality customer service does not go away as our funding reduces. We must develop more cost effective ways for our customers to contact us and encourage and support our customers to use them.

Workforce development – a training and development plan will be produced for customer services. We'll:

- invest in training for all our staff which will include equality awareness and data protection training
- include customer service awareness in our appraisal process

COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Community engagement

We have, through elected members, a unique community leadership role among providers of public services, working with partners, local businesses, voluntary organisations and communities themselves to create positive conditions in the District.

We'll strengthen partnership working, and work with communities to achieve the long-term wellbeing of people in the District. We'll encourage residents to play a part in their communities, and we'll help them to do this. There are already excellent examples of our community development work helping to build capacity in communities and we'll evaluate and build on that work.

We aim to be a trusted source of information, advice and guidance, using our website and other self-service options.

Our elected members are the first point of contact for many residents, but their role in customer delivery is sometimes complex. We'll support elected members by providing them with better information so that they are able to resolve a range of enquiries and issues on behalf of the communities they represent.

We'll:

- get to know our communities and improve the way we work with them
- improve the information available to elected members and their ability to access it.

Partnership working

We're working closely with partners across the District and beyond to make sure our customers get the right help and support. We'll set out clearly how we'll share customer's information with our partners. We want our customers to be confident that we're protecting their privacy but also using important information effectively to make sure they get the help and support they need.

We'll:

- work with partners to make it as convenient as we can for customers to get help and support
- keep personal information secure.

WHAT WE'LL DO, HOW AND WHEN

We're committed to providing a range of customer contact options supported by clear information, advice and guidance.

We'll continue to develop well-designed options which customers can use whenever they need to request a service, complete an application, make a payment or report an issue.

We'll promote online options and help customers to use them by:

- investing in online options including our website, automatic telephone lines, SMS text, social media and mobile phone apps
- supporting the roll out of superfast broadband across the District to help more of our customers access the information they need and the services they want in the most convenient way
- providing equipment in a range of buildings and helping people to use it
- identifying and working with individuals or groups who need extra help to access services
- helping customers to access online options through live web chat and our telephone contact centre teams.

We'll aim to resolve enquiries first time. To achieve this we'll invest in staff training and make sure they have access to good information. Key actions for us over the next two years are:

- to gather feedback from customers to help us design our services better
- to develop common standards of service for all contact
- to publish clearer information, reducing the need for customers to contact us
- to reduce the number of different telephone numbers we publish
- to provide automatic telephone options for simple requests and enquiries.

Email and paper communication

We aim to reduce the amount of direct email, post and paper communication by increasing the range of easy to use automated e-forms. We'll only use letters where it's absolutely essential. To support and enable this approach we'll:

- provide an improved range of online e-forms and encourage and support our customers to use them.

SERVICE STANDARDS

Our Customer Service Strategy is a demonstration of our commitment to our customers. We aim to deliver a consistently good service whenever our customers contact us and strive for excellence in everything we do.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CUSTOMERS

When you contact us we will:

- be respectful, polite and treat you with dignity
- be clear about what you can expect from us
- give you a positive experience whenever you contact us
- resolve enquiries the first time you contact us, wherever possible (working towards a target of resolving 80% of enquiries at first contact)
- do things when we say we will, and be clear about our timescales
- make it easy for you to give us feedback. We'll listen, learn and improve
- encourage and support you to tell us when you're not happy and deal with your complaints within agreed timescales
- help and support you to use our online services
- respond to your messages or requests through social media promptly during normal working hours (during exceptional or emergency situations we'll respond out of hours too)
- offer you an appointment with a member of staff if you need more support
- keep the information you give us safe and secure.

We expect that you will:

- be respectful and polite to our staff
- be considerate of other customers
- use our new online services if you can, and be willing to try new ways of contacting us
- keep us informed of personal changes which might affect the services we provide to you
- keep to agreed appointments or let us know if you need to change them
- provide us with feedback about your experiences to help us to learn and improve.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF WE'RE IMPROVING?

We are determined to improve the service we offer our customers

Our overall measure of success will be customer satisfaction with our services. We'll make sure that customers can contact us easily and use more services online. We'll measure some contacts in detail such as complaints and feedback, how many customers use online services and how many customers we support to live independently.

We will:

- survey customers regarding satisfaction with our services
- ask customers for feedback as part of the way we work
- take advice from those who face the greatest difficulty in accessing services
- review the measures of success and the strategy every year from 2016/17 onwards
- report progress every quarter through our cabinet and publish on our website
- we'll work continuously to improve our customer services. A detailed plan is in place to make sure we deliver efficiently and on time. We'll make sure that improving customer service becomes part of the normal way we work.

Action Plan