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# **Customer Contact Strategy**

**2014 - 2017**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Oxford City Council has an aspiration to create a world-class city for everyone, delivering world-class services.

World class customer service for Oxford City means:

- Consistent; right first time service delivery.
- Proactively seeking customer feedback to inform service delivery.
- Customer service being at the heart of our values and behaviours.
- Working in partnership with complementary organisations to provide added value to our customers
- Enabling as many customers as possible to access our services using the most efficient and cost effective channels (web and contact centre), whilst ensuring our face-to-face service is available for those customers who most need it.
- Ensuring our end to end processes are as efficient as possible and that the customer journey and contact can be tracked.

1.2 'Customers First' is one of the Council's transformation themes, focusing on putting customer needs at the forefront of its work and improving customer service. This Customer Contact Strategy sets out where we are now, and using detailed insight and customer feedback sets out the strategic direction for the period 2014/17 together with an action plan to further improve our customer contact and service delivery. The Strategy is built upon the key values of the City Council which are:

- Excellent public service at the heart of everything we do
- Putting communities and customers first
- Taking personal responsibility
- Embracing innovation
- Valuing diversity

## 2. WHERE ARE WE NOW

2.1 Since 2009, the Council's Customer First Programme has delivered the following outcomes:

- Constant measuring of customer satisfaction, which is monitored and benchmarked with over 100 other local authorities. The corporate target for customer satisfaction is set at 75% (and is being achieved), and covers the service experienced in our contact centre, customer service centres and website. Customer satisfaction with the telephone contact centre specifically is at 91%, putting us just outside top ten performances with our benchmark peers. More work needs to be done to improve satisfaction levels with our face-to-face service and the Council's website.
- Single customer contact centre with one telephone number for the organisation, providing access to a wide range of Council services. Over 90% of all customers get through first time using this number. A new telephony software system offering a range of new functionality.
- A modern walk in customer service centre providing access to officers via appointment or "drop in" alongside self-service facilities. The customer service centre is also available for partner surgeries and is being effectively used by Carers Oxfordshire and Shelter to introduce a one-stop-shop of local services.
- Multi skilled Customer Service Officers who are able to deal with a wide range of customer enquiries; Housing Repairs, Tenancy Services, Rents and Homeless, Housing Benefits and Council Tax, Waste Recycling and Garden Waste. Environmental Development – Pest and Dog Warden services and Planning enquiries. Over 90% of all enquiries handled either face-to-face or over the telephone are resolved at point of contact and without hand off to the back office.
- Customer Service Excellence accreditation in June 2013, achieving full compliance with all 57 parts of the standard.

2.2 Customers currently resolve their enquiries by visiting one of the Council's Customer Service Centres at St Aldates or Templar Square, Cowley; telephoning the Customer Contact Centre; or visiting the Council's website. The customer enquiry numbers for 2012/13 for each channel are as follows:

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Enquiries Per Annum</b>
Face-to-face	15,600
Telephone	261,850
Web – on line form usage	25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>302,450</b>

In the Contact Centre the call volumes per service area for 2012/13 were as follows:

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Enquiry Volumes</b>
Waste	40,000
Elections	2,050
Housing repairs	37,000
Tenancy and rent	22,000
Housing benefit	29,000
Council tax	38,000
Business rates	3,400
Planning	8,900
Pest and dogs	5,500
No option selected by customer *	76,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>261,850</b>

\* This data is taken from the telephone system and denotes customers who do not select a particular option from the automated options presented

2.3 The unit costs associated with each channel compared to the benchmark average are as follows:

<b>Access Channel</b>	<b>Current Unit Cost £</b>	<b>**Benchmark Unit Cost £</b>
Face-to-face	£30	£10 - £14
Telephone	£5.80	£3 – £5
Web		£0.08

\*\* Benchmark sourced from SOCITM and PWC

2.4 Current service performance and future targets for delivering Customer Service through to 2017/18 are:

	Target	Current Position	Targets			
Measure Name	2013/14	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Improved customer satisfaction at first point of contact	75%	78%	77%	79%	80%	80%
Percentage of customers getting through first time on the Council's main telephone number	95%	93%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Increased percentage of telephone calls answered within 20 seconds	85	68	80	80	80	80
The level of self-service transactions that are carried out using the Council's website	18%	13.8%	5% *	5%*	5%*	5%*

\*5% year-on-year increase with the baseline for each new year being the outturn performance of the previous year.

### 3. INSIGHT INTO OXFORD CITY CUSTOMERS

3.1 The demographics of Oxford's population dictate to some extent the nature of the service needs. The 2011 Census key headlines are listed below. Further demographic information can be found at Appendix A.

- Rapid population growth over the last decade with large increases in the number of children and young people
- International migration has driven population growth and ethnic diversity has increased and is expected to become increasingly diverse
- Large increase in the number of students
- Large increase in the number of people in the labour market
- More households live in flats, and more rent their home
- Growth in households has been driven by families with children, single adults and 'other' households (e.g. houses in multiple occupation)

3.2 Oxford's population in 2011 was estimated to be 151,900, an increase of 12% since 2001 and is deemed to be one of the fastest growing local authority areas in England. By 2021 it is projected to be @160,000. The Council itself has approximately 7,800 tenants. Because of the very large university student population (which has increased

by 6,000 over the last decade), Oxford's population is very young. 35% of the population is aged between 15 and 29 years (compared to a UK average of 20%). Although the UK is experiencing an ageing population, Oxford's population is expected to get younger in the future, with most population growth coming from the working age population.

- 3.3 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131st out of 354, placing it in the top half most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. These areas are in the Leys, Barton, Littlemore and Rose Hill areas of the city, and experience multiple levels of deprivation - low skills, low incomes and high levels of crime; the majority of the council's 7,800 tenants live in these areas. Men and women from the least deprived areas can expect to live six years longer than those in the most deprived areas.
- 3.4 In 2012, 80% of all UK households had internet access. 93% of households with Internet access used a fixed broadband connection, of which 30 per cent used a cable or fibre optic connection. In 2012, 67 per cent of adults in Great Britain used a computer every day, rising to over 80% amongst people under 45 years of age. Access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2012, from 24% to 51%. In 2012, 32% of adults accessed the Internet using a mobile phone every day.
- 3.5 Whilst we do not have statistics about the level and type of Internet use in Oxford, as the city has a very young population due to the large number of university students, we can expect that internet usage in Oxford is higher than the national average. Education is also an important determinant of whether people have internet access at home. Almost all adults (93%) who have a degree-level qualification are estimated to have internet access at home – compared to 56% of people with no formal qualifications. Oxford has a higher than average proportion of residents with degree-level qualifications, and a lower than average proportion with no qualifications. This is another reason why we can expect internet usage in Oxford to be higher than the national average. However in the deprived areas of the city very high proportions of the population have no qualifications, so in these areas there may be lower than average rates of internet usage.

#### **4. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW**

- 4.1 The country is still in a period of economic austerity and local authorities are facing one of the most difficult public funding climates seen for decades. Significant areas of social policy reform are also being implemented to reduce public spending at a national level. This means that many vulnerable people in Oxford will face new and additional financial pressures, whilst essential services are stretched by unprecedented demand and the loss of key funding streams.
- 4.2 Locally we have a growing population that is increasingly younger, mobile and includes a large number of students; and yet Oxford remains one of the least affordable places to live in the country. There is a growing and significant ethnic population; of whom a high proportion does not have English as their first language. Twelve areas of the City are amongst the most deprived in England, 7,800 of our tenants live predominately in these areas.
- 4.3 It is vital that this Customer Contact Strategy, as far as possible, allows all of our customers, but in particular those alienated by language, skills or income, the ability to access our services easily and efficiently in the way which best suits their circumstances. In addition, to make best use of our resources, our services need to be efficient and allow us to offer least-cost access channels to our customers when

this is the best solution for them. Consequently; we need to focus on improving our website so the optimal numbers of customers find it easy and efficient to use.

4.4 As we have such a diverse population one service solution will not fit all, and it is therefore important to use what we know and learn from our customers as well as involving them in the design of our services, to ensure we make services that are fit-for-purpose and in turn well-used.

4.5 As an organisation we are committed to delivering great Council services. The Customer Service Excellence standard provides a framework which ensures delivery of accessible services through the involvement of customers. Therefore rolling this framework out across the Council will ensure we have a consistent high quality approach to customer contact in all aspects of our business.

4.6 The impact of these national and local drivers combined with what we have learnt from recent consultation, has led to three clear themes that underpin this Customer Contact Strategy:

- Accessible User friendly Services
- Using customer insight to inform service design
- Embedding Customer Service Excellence across the Council.

## 5. DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY – KEY MILESTONES

5.1 In order to deliver the three key themes of the Strategy we have developed the following key milestones:

### **Accessible User Friendly Services**

- Implement a regular programme to reach all customer groups through the lifetime of the Strategy
- Improve the website in terms of ease of use and access
- Develop partnership working and analyse opportunities for improved service delivery
- Improve current access channels using data analysis and feedback from customers, community groups and businesses
- Deliver what our customers have told us is great customer service

### **Using Customer Insight to Inform Service Design**

- Develop a new repairs online service working with tenants.
- Programme of targeted marketing to promote our services
- Embed learning from customer feedback into service areas and introduce challenge on service redesign as a result

### **Embedding Customer Excellence Across the Council**

- Implement CSE accreditation across organisation where appropriate (in some areas another accreditation may be more applicable)
- Agree areas where City Council can apply for Compliance Plus standard – as an exemplar of best practice in those areas

5.2 This Strategy will be overseen by the Customer First Programme Board, and coordinated on a day to day basis by the Customer First Programme Manager. An action plan detailing the key milestones and actions can be found in Appendix B.

### Demographic Information

1. Oxford is a relatively diverse population in terms of people's ethnicity. In 2011, 22% of the population were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds, compared to an England average of 13%. An additional 14% of residents were of white but non-British backgrounds. This is partly a result of the large number of people born outside the UK - in 2011, 28% of Oxford residents had been born outside the UK compared to 19% in 2001. The largest non-white ethnic groups represented are Pakistani, Indian, Black African, 'other Asian' and Chinese ethnic groups. The diversity of the population varies considerably by age. The child population is considerably more ethnically diverse than the older population and as a result the population is expected to get more ethnically diverse in the future.
2. In 2011, 23,700 Oxford residents said they had a main language which was not English. At 16% of the population, this is twice the 8% national average. Of those residents whose main language was not English, the vast majority reported that they could speak English well or very well. 1.8% of residents (2,600 people) said they could not speak English or could not speak it well. This is similar to the 1.7% national average. After English, the most common main languages were Polish and Chinese languages, followed by French, Portuguese and Spanish. South Asian languages - Urdu, Bengali and Panjabi - made up a large proportion too.
3. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131st out of 354, placing it in the top half most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. These areas are in the Leys, Barton, Littlemore and Rose Hill areas of the city, and experience multiple levels of deprivation - low skills, low incomes and high levels of crime; the majority of the council's 7,800 tenants live in these areas. Men and women from the least deprived areas can expect to live six years longer than those in the most deprived areas
4. A large proportion of the population – 43% has degree-level qualifications or above. At the other end of the spectrum, 14% (17,000 people) have no qualifications at all. This is strongly age-related – older people are more likely than younger people to have no formal qualifications.
5. Oxford's high housing prices – both in the property market and the rental sector – make it one of the least affordable places in the country. The percentage of households who own their home is relatively low in Oxford - 47% compared to 63% in England. The percentage of households renting their home in the private sector is high - 28% in Oxford compared with 17% in England. Over the last decade the number of households renting their home in the private sector rose by almost 50%, from nearly 11,000 households in 2001 to nearly 16,000 households in 2011. We have approximately 12,000 benefits claimants. The number of households who owned their house declined.
6. 144 households were living in temporary accommodation we provide in the city as of December 2011. At the same time our waiting list figures exceeded 6,000 households. This is a much higher rate than those of neighbouring districts and the South East region.
7. Unemployment rates for Oxford City are presently at 5.7%, compared to an average for Great Britain of 7.9% (2012 estimate). The large universities and hospitals mean that Oxford has a larger than average number of jobs in the service sector – most

notably, 46% of all employee jobs is in the public administration, education or health sectors. The second largest employment sector is financial and business services, accounting for 24% of jobs. Manufacturing accounts for 9% of jobs, half of which are at the BMW car plant. Retail employment accounts for around one-tenth of jobs in Oxford. There has been steady growth in the number of businesses registered in Oxford over the past decade, from 2,600 in 1995 to 4,000 in 2011.

8. In 2012, 80% of all UK households had internet access. This has grown from 57% of households in 2006. 93 per cent of households with Internet access used a fixed broadband connection, of which 30 per cent used a cable or fibre optic connection. In 2012, 67 per cent of adults in Great Britain used a computer every day, rising to over 80% amongst people under 45 years of age. Access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2012, from 24% to 51%. In 2012, 32% of adults accessed the Internet using a mobile phone every day.
9. We do not have statistics about the level and type of Internet use in Oxford. However, as the city has a very young population due to the large number of university students, we can expect that internet usage in Oxford is higher than the national average. Education is also an important determinant of whether people have internet access at home. Almost all adults (93%) who had a degree-level qualification are estimated to have internet access at home – compared to 56% of people with no formal qualifications. Oxford has a higher than average proportion of the population with degree-level qualifications, and a lower than average proportion of the population with no qualifications. This is another reason why we can expect internet usage in Oxford to be higher than the national average. However in the deprived areas of the city very high proportions of the population have no qualifications, so in these areas there may be lower than average rates of internet usage.

Appendix B

Customer Contact Strategy Action Plan

Aim	Key milestones	Action	Target Date	Lead Officer /Service
<b>Accessible User Friendly Services</b>	Implement a regular programme to reach all customer groups through the lifetime of the Strategy	Agree timescales and priorities to meet with hard to reach customers (aim to engage with one group per month)	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Customer Contact Service Team
		Identify actions from community group consultation to increase accessibility (in particular usability of the Council's website)	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Customer Contact Service Team
		Utilise the data the Council holds within the Council's IT systems to better understand the demographic makeup of our customers	Mar 14 – Mar 16	Head of Business Improvement & Technology
		Market and publicise self-serve opportunities	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Media & Communications Team
	Improve usability of website (including self-serve opportunities)	Improve the Council's website so it can be used on mobile devices	Jul 14-Sep 14	Head of Business Improvement & Technology
		Improve the website so it is easy to use i.e. minimal clicks	Mar 14 – Mar15	
		Improve the electronic forms including greater integration with back office systems	Sep 14	Head of Business Improvement & Technology
		Promote the usage of electronic forms for claiming benefits and electronic billing for Business Rates and Council Tax Payers	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Head of Customer Services
		Investigate feasibility and on-going costs for providing self-serve PC's in public buildings & in other organisations	Mar 14 – Dec 14	Head of Business Improvement & Technology

		where the council commissions a service.		
Develop partnership working and analyse opportunities for improved service delivery		Using analysed data and engaged community groups to identify partner opportunities	Apr 14	Customer Contact Service Team
		Monitor and improve service level agreements with back office service providers	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Customer Contact Service Team
		Agree and implement a Local Support Services Framework with Job Centre Plus	Mar 14 – Mar 15	Head of Customer Services
		Make partnerships with agencies / community groups identified	Apr 14 onwards	Head of Customer Services
Improve current access channels using data analysis and feedback from customers, community groups and businesses		Review opportunities for voice recognition technology & other new service functionalities in telephony	Jul 14	Customer Contact Centre Manager
		Investigate opportunities for sending email or text in response to customer queries	Dec 14	Head of Business Improvement & Technology
		Continue to develop successful training for Customer Contact staff to meet customer expectation	On-going	Customer Contact Centre Manager
Confirm & deliver what our customers have told us is great customer service		Review current standards for the Customer Contact Centre & Customer Service Centre and introduce a new “Customer Service Charter”.	May 14	Head of Customer Services
		Implement Customer Service standards for the whole Council	May 14	Head of Customer Services

<b>Using Customer Insight to inform Service Design</b>	Develop a new repairs online service working with tenants.	Repair Policy review begins by Head of Housing	Mar14	Head of Housing
		Project Board convened & Tenant participation panel created	Mar-Apr 14	Head of Business Improvement & Technology
		System built for tenants to review (& amended post-feedback)	Mar-Oct 14	
		Market & promote new service to tenants	Nov – Dec 14	
<b>Using Customer Insight to inform Service Design</b>	Programme of targeted marketing to promote our services	Communications Team to produce a programme for ongoing promotion of new and existing services & targeted marketing.	Apr 14	Media & Communications Team
		Analyse use of voice recognition Feb 14-Feb 15 to inform change in services	Feb15	Customer Contact Centre Manager
	Embed learning from customer feedback into service areas and introduce challenge on service redesign as a result	Expand current methods i.e. regular CMT sessions on 3C's, SLA meetings Carry out customer journey mapping Identify avoidable contact Identify opportunities for service redesign	To be agreed with Heads of Service on a rolling monthly basis	All Heads of Service Customer Contact Centre Manager Customer Contact Centre Manager Customer Contact Centre Manager
<b>Embedding Customer Excellence across the</b>	Implement CSE accreditation across organisation where appropriate (in some	Appoint Project Manager	Apr 14	Customer Contact Centre Manager and
		Agree draft programme for implementation	Apr 14	

<b>Council</b>	areas another accreditation may be more applicable)	Agree project plan with service area/s	May 14	Heads of Service
	Submit to CSE Assessor areas where City Council can apply for Compliance Plus standard – as an exemplar of best practice in those areas	Compile business case	Jun 14	Customer Contact Centre Manager

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