



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Customer Access Strategy 2022 - 2025



Foreward - Cllr Gordon Moore

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Access

"This strategy sets out Rushcliffe Borough Council's Customer Access Strategy for 2022-2025 to deliver contemporary, efficient and easy to use contact channels to enable our customers to access our services where and when they need them, enhanced by increasing digital access to services.

"It will respond to our customer's current and future needs and tailor services within existing budgets whilst identifying and exploring innovative digital options customers can understand and relate to.

"Our customers require services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable and cost effective.

"Therefore we need to increasingly adapt to new technologies to help us deliver these services whilst understanding the expectation that existing traditional methods of communication face to face and over the phone remain.

"We also need to explore services in a post lockdown COVID environment with our partners and communities to assess if there is agreements and partnerships that can increasingly benefit our stakeholders.

"Increasing free available internet access and mobile technology across Rushcliffe mean that customers expect to access services and be able to communicate with us anytime and anywhere.

"They are also more willing to use self-service channels because of the greater convenience they offer and this channel shift needs to be explored further in the timeframe of this strategy.

"The shift to digital channels and self-service needs to continue to be addressed, building on research and best practice that it is driven by customer needs, delivering part of this strategy that highlights it is fit for purpose and timely and measurable to meet the changes in customers' demands.

"This Customer Access Strategy will support delivery of the Council's priority of efficient services whilst complementing its linked External and Internal Communications Strategy."



Our vision and commitment to our customers

To provide solutions that engage, empower and enable our customers to retain a great quality of life

Our Corporate objectives and customer focus

Our Cabinet, Executive Management Team, Councillors and staff are committed to customers accessing our services in methods that suit their needs. Whilst increasing digital services will continue as part of this strategy, focus will remain on the balance to engage with customers face to face at our sites and explore customer offer with partner organisations.



This Customer Access Strategy will support delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy priorities in 2019-2023 that specifically include assisting with quality of life and efficient services through ensuring access is timely, convenient and easy to use whether digital, over the phone or in-person.



Context

Rushcliffe has over 119,000 residents with varying needs spread across urban centres of six large towns and villages matched with significant rural areas.

We continue to strive to be a well run council despite increasing customer demands on all digital channels in recent years matched with the same demand via phone and a slightly reduced demand for face to face services, compared to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Since re-opening all customer sites since June 2021 there has been a significant rise in the number of people contacting us via use email or websites to complete enquiries, interactions and processes.

At the same time, the number of people using mobile technology is increasing as are the volume of stakeholders now going online using different devices in any location. This change is also reflected in the way customers access our website.

Since 2019 there has been a shift from using PCs to access our website to using tablets and phones instead with 84% of adults now estimated to own a smartphone.

We need to respond to these changes in our customers' habits by ensuring that more of our services are designed to be delivered digitally, aided by review of the Council's existing website options.

This will provide quicker and more convenient access for those customers who choose to use digital services and allow for further identification where those who can't or choose to not access services digitally can be encouraged to do so.










Contemporary channels such as the website are well established and therefore there is clearly even further potential to encourage more customers to make the switch from face to face and phone exchanges to aid ever more efficient services for the customer.



Channel shift in light of COVID-19

COVID-19 made a significant impact on service delivery and created less emphasis on access on face to face enquiries from customers.

This strategy builds on this with an acceptance that there is a dichotomy between greater digital access and also protecting the more vulnerable. Importantly, since the pandemic began in 2020, customer satisfaction has not been adversely effected.

<p>Email:</p> <p>1,921 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>1,352 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Web Enquiries:</p> <p>692 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>478 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Phone:</p> <p>9,094 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>7,381 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>
<p>Face to face - West Bridgford:</p> <p>816 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>276 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>	 <p>Rushcliffe Borough Council</p>	<p>Face to face - Contact Points:</p> <p>109 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>72 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>
<p>Web form usage:</p> <p>7,009 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>4,353 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Total interactions:</p> <p>18,154 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>17,451 Pre Covid average per month.</p>	<p>Total postal enquiries:</p> <p>1,249 Pre Covid average per month.</p> <p></p> <p>803 June 2021-March 2022 average per month.</p>



As of Summer 2022, the majority of customers contact us via:

Phone - 8,115 calls a month*

Email - 2,166 a month*

Web enquiries to www.rushcliffe.gov.uk - 855 a month*

***Face to face with our advisors at four sites across the Borough:
Rushcliffe Customer Service Centre, West Bridgford - 480 visits a month****

Cotgrave Library, Cotgrave Hub - 46 visits a month*

East Leake Library - 24 visits a month*

Bingham Medical Centre - 62 visits a month*

****April-June 2022 average***



Developing understanding to help our customers even more

Developing increased better understanding of our customers forms a key part of this strategy.

As we move towards ever more accessible services and efficient communication, we will look to adapt this document to any of the changing requirements of our customers and communities and the ways in which local people want to interact with the Council.

Therefore we will continue to highlight, identify and be clear about who our customers are, the level of service they actually want, how customers currently access our services and how they might access those services in the future.

Therefore the strategy as created a rationale to have these overarching aims before identifying set objectives to ever increase this understanding of customers' needs to access services effectively.

Our rationale:

To improve services for our customers, we need to continue to have better understanding of who they are and how they expect services to be delivered.

Traditional methods of contact, such as face to face can be more expensive and time consuming.

Understanding why certain customers prefer these channels can help us to help them to move to quicker and more efficient channels.

Examining the customer journey and the cost of delivering each process can identify key areas for improvement as well as the areas customers consider to be less important and identify where we prioritise service resources.

Using customer insight, feedback and consulting with different customer groups and partner organisations will help us to understand the requirements of our customers and develop end to end digital transactions to encourage use and ease of access to online services allowing in person and telephone queries to be focused on vulnerable customers or those with complex needs or cases.

Identifying these customer groups for which digital services and self-service may not be the most suitable type of access, will enable us to develop our services to meet all of our customers' needs and ensure no one is excluded from accessing services.

Understanding our customers and our services during will enable us to make decisions based on real data and real customer feedback instead of making assumptions about what our customers want.

We will achieve these aims by...

- Continuing to develop more understanding of who our customers are through analysis of our ESB Customer Relationship Management and other systems' data on enquiries
- Understand further why services are used in the way they are by customers whether for convenience or if they are unaware of, for example, other digital routes to have their query resolved.
- Understand further and define the needs and expectations of customers across different communities. For example this could mean assessing if there are different needs of customers at our urban Customer Service Centre versus those at our Customer Contact Points located closer to our more rural communities
- Continue to capture accurate customer data to guide which services can be channelled more effectively digitally
- Understand further the cost of delivering our services and where we can identify partner organisations who can benefit from shared services or space at our sites.
- Develop our systems to collect and monitor customer feedback and satisfaction from all access channels
- Regularly review of Freedom of Information requests, complaints and compliments

Our Customer Access Strategy Key Themes



Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation	Theme: Embedding further self-service	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Identify and explore new communication and contact channels such as chat bots, whats app , text and other channels stakeholders use frequently to improve the range of options of how to contact Customer Services in line with the Council's website development.	Further develop self-serve terminals at customer sites to further educate and inform customers they can interact with services ever quicker and easier to resolve their queries.	In line with My Account phase two and website projects, explore ways to showcase further digital solutions to queries at point of contact with residents at Customer Service sites.
Why?	So customers can utilise channels they are familiar with and can relate to, making communication contemporary and convenient in line with constantly evolving methods of engagement.	To ensure customers continue to have the option of how to access our services through digital means. Upskilling individuals at our sites means they can resolve queries themselves or be aware how to use the digital alternatives online.	Building on self-serve terminals campaigns, outline where common reporting tools being available online to aid channel shift as digital awareness of services is heightened.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Summer 2024 and analysis of any newly introduced channels .	Volume of customers switched to using self-service terminals than relying on face to face queries. 1,000 customers a year prompted to try self-service option for their queries.	Lower volumes of calls and face to face queries year on year as more customers switch to more convenient digital ways to engage with services.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 - exploring new channels work ongoing.	October 2022 - customers will be engaged to familiarise themselves with self-serve terminals in annual dedicated campaign.	October 2022 - customers to be engaged at point of contact at face to face sites

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Identify and explore where services can be increasingly channelled to a online option such as garden waste service and licensing in line with service proposals, systems and processes.	Review existing contact point locations to ensure customers can access face to face services easily and conveniently.	Introduce free wi-fi at our customer sites to increase visitor experience and aid speed and convenience to access online information and access.
Why?	To build on and maximise the channel shift and behaviour changes since 2020 that sees ever increasing customers use online options. Also to 'nudge' customers to use these more convenient options that can decrease administrative face to face time.	To ensure customers have sites that can be accessed more easily whether through nearby public transport stops or car parking.	To ensure customers can be supported in being informed on their own digital device of how to have their queries answered even more conveniently.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Analysis of services that are partly or wholly switched to online service.	In line with existing leases and service level agreements with partners, review each site annually to assess its location meets customers' needs.	The volume of sites achieving free wi-fi status and communicated on site to customers
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2023 - agree which services will be signposted to partly or wholly online to aid their evolution,	October 2022	Summer 2024

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Listening and responding and Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Listening and responding
What are we going to do?	Consult with Customer Service Advisors to further explore key themes and insights as to where the service could be ever more adaptable to customers' needs.	Signpost programmes to help customers develop digital skills, co-ordinated from our partners across Nottinghamshire.	Communicate clear Customer Service Standards across channels and sites so customers are aware of likely response times and keep these under continued review.
Why?	Ensure advisors' views are recorded to help shape the service, listening to where interactions and access to services can be improved to aid the customer experience with RBC.	So customers can receive access to new skills that can aid them accessing services more easily and increase their wider digital learning.	So customers feel the service is approachable and clear with standards and responds they can relate to and match their expectations.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Ongoing channels to feedback views, culminating in annual check list of points, highlighting what changes have been made.	Volume of customers signposted to programmes. Target of 1,000 customers a year to receive information on local courses and information.	Standards communicated prominently at point of contact to service on phone, website or face to face query.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022	Summer 2022	December 2022 in line with Customer First project.

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Reviewing and building on partnerships	Theme: Listening and responding	Theme: Building on and exploring innovation
What are we going to do?	Review service level agreements with partners to identify further areas where services can be shared or enhanced.	Build on ways to routinely monitor customer feedback and satisfaction such as mystery shopper project and skills audits.	Regularly evaluate Liberty Converse phone system, ESB Customer Relationship System and all related software for a modern, responsive service.
Why?	In order to ensure the agreements best suit the needs of the service and identify where existing resources and sites can be used to the benefit of the Council and partners.	Ensure customer service standards are consistently met through learning and further evaluation of existing skills.	Ensure the software is giving Customers Services advisors the best experience to ensure they can answer enquiries ever more effectively.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	December 2022 and ongoing. Partner list identified, contacted and consulted to ensure options are explored.	Annual mystery shopper project and annual team skills audit reviews.	In line with existing contracts, annual review of latest options of all software to ensure latest updates or upgrades are reviewed.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.

Customer Services Action Plan 2022-2025

	Theme: Embedding further self-service	Theme: Embedding further self-service
What are we going to do?	Reshape postal communications as a key access channel. Signpost further how customers can access services and communicate with the Council digitally, in line with environmental approach on reducing print and postage.	Embedding a culture of self-service through automated processes, ease of access and ongoing staff and councillor training regarding systems.
Why?	In line with one of the four Corporate Priorities on the Environment, look to reduce paper usage and reduce carbon footprint. Highlight to customers they can join the Council on its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.	To further educate key stakeholders in staff and councillors how they can champion the ease and convenience of self-service to customers. Their direct and indirect connections to customers can play a role in highlighting how to access digital options.
How will we know when we have achieved it?	Volume of post received reducing each year of the strategy.	Number of staff and councillors referring customers to digital options increasing each year of the strategy.
Decision to be made by?	Summer 2022 and ongoing.	Summer 2022 and ongoing.



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