Achieving Customer Service Excellence

Reading Borough Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2020–2024

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Foreword

I'm delighted to launch this report, which outlines Reading Borough Council's new Customer Experience Strategy.

As we enter the new decade, I'm more aware than ever of how far and how fast our customers' expectations are changing. From artificial intelligence and Big Data, to social media and smart speakers (such as Alexa), the digital age has transformed how customers interact with brands – and your local council is no different. In order to provide you with the best service possible, we need to transform and modernise how we serve you, businesses and other residents across the town.

Research shows that customers increasingly want service that is fast, personalised, proactive and connected. To us that means making sure customers can transact with the Council at a time and place of their choosing, on any device and at any time of day. And if anything goes wrong, the issue will be resolved quickly. It also means that we recognise that some people might need extra support to access services, and we must ensure it is available.

This is more than just a strategy. This is a promise to all our customers. It is about better use of technology – such as more options to complete transactions through 'self-service' systems, having one single sign on for users and joining up systems so information is stored better. But it's also about more than technology. It's about an attitude and approach that puts customers at the heart of everything we do here at Reading Borough Council, from how we design services to how we respond to your feedback.

At its core, this is about making sure that everyone who interacts with the Council has a better day as a result. I think that's an exciting goal to aspire to, and I hope you do too.

Cllr Ellie Emberson
Lead Member for Corporate and Consumer Services

Executive Summary

This strategy sets out our vision to achieve the best possible experience for our customers, whoever they are (residents, businesses, partners or suppliers) and whenever they deal with us.

It also sets out our plan to get there by putting customers at the heart of everything we do. Our customers will be able to connect with us at the time and place they choose. They will only need to tell us once and will be confident that we will get it right first time.

Every interaction will be a positive experience: better, faster, simpler.

The strategy is aligned to the TEAM Reading Culture and has informed our strategy and approach to serving our customers:

T — **We will work Together:** A whole organisation approach

E — **We will drive Efficiency:** Adopting new technology and streamlining processes

A — **We will be Ambitious:** Adopting new stretch target across all our customer facing services

M — **We will Make a Difference:** Ensuring our customers have a positive experience and their needs are met

Our 'whole organisation' approach, will ensure we embed consistent behaviours and measures of success, and we will evaluate our performance across all customer facing teams. We will design our services to meet the needs of customers and make the best use of new technology. This will help us reduce the cost of delivering services and allow us to focus even more on customers with complex needs. At the heart of it all, our customers will have a positive experience wherever and however they interact with us.

Our 'customer experience philosophy' will guide how we design and deliver our services, and ultimately how we all behave. There are six elements to this philosophy:

2
Adopting a mindset and promise

3
Involving the whole organisation

1
Achieving Customer Service Excellence

4
Putting the customer at the heart of service and processes

6
Realising the power of data

5
Harnessing digital technology

1 **Achieving Customer Service Excellence**

We want to make interacting with us easy and effective. Customers will be able to connect with us at the time and place they choose. They will only need to tell us once and will be confident that we will get it right first time. We will leave every customer with a positive impression of the Council and feeling their day is just that little bit better.

2 **Adopting a mindset and promise**

We will embed an exemplary customer experience philosophy that shapes the way all our staff across the Council deal with customers, whether they are residents, businesses, partners or suppliers and we will also adopt this approach when working with our colleagues and delivery of our internal services.

3 **Involving the whole organisation**

We will transform our internal Customer Service model. We will bring together our multiple customer service teams into one, highly-skilled Customer Fulfilment Team. We will equip these frontline staff to deal with a range of issues, by extending and expanding the scope of the current customer service offer. We will ensure that when a customer first gets in touch we will able to resolve their issue without needing to pass them onwards, unless the issue is highly technical.

4 **Putting the customer at the heart of service and processes**

We will change how we work and look at our services and processes through the lens of the customer to ensure services are accessible and processes are lean. We will make better use of digital to provide customers with more opportunities to resolve issues themselves through self-service, and with better support to complete transactional services.

5 **Harnessing digital technology**

We will deliver a best-in-class digital experience for our customers. We will use new and existing channels and technology, from enabling more customers to use self-service, to using Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Process Automation to make resolving issues faster, easier and more accurate.

6 **Realising the power of our data**

We will join up the data we hold across different systems and services, and use it to our customers' advantage. We will aim to create a 'golden record' of our customers so we can see all their data in one place and not ask them to repeat their information to us for different transactions. We will use data to better plan the shape and size of our services according to need and demand, and to move towards designing services that predict customers' needs based on what the data tell us.

Measuring Success

Adopting this strategy will lead to better outcomes for our customers and we will measure our success by:

Measure	Baseline	New Target	Timescale
Achieving Customer Service Excellence We will do what we say first time and leave the customer with a positive impression of the council			
Increase Customer satisfaction across existing contact centre functions	87%	90%	End of year 1
Establish Customer satisfaction levels for new services brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	–	End of year 1
Increase Customer satisfaction for new services brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	85% 90%	End of year 2 End of year 3
Increase solved at first point of contact for existing contact centre functions	82%	90%	End of year 3
Establish levels of contacts solved at first point of contact within the new service areas brought into customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	–	End of year 1
Reduce time to respond to customer complaints	20 days	15 days	End of year 2
Adopting a mindset and promise Customer fulfilment will be a living part of our culture			
Launch Customer promise	–	–	Mid year 1
Staff attending an awareness raising session about our customer philosophy	–	95%	End of year 1
New recruits to undertake customer focus specific training	–	100%	End of year 1

Measure	Baseline	New Target	Timescale
Involving the whole organisation We make customer services accessible and remove barriers to delivering customer fulfilment			
Standardise customer model across all directorates	–	100%	End of year 3
Introduce new standard job description for customer fulfilment team	–	100%	End of year 1
Putting the customer at the heart of service and processes We will remove bureaucracy and make it easy for customers to interact with us			
Reduce number of face to face visits to the reception hub	88,600	5%* 5% 20%	End of year 1 End of year 2 End of year 3
Reduce numbers of face to face visits to the reception hub or new services brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured?	5%* 5% 20%	End of year 1 End of year 2 End of year 3
Reduce phone calls into existing contact centre	230,000	30%	End of year 3
Establish phone calls volumes within new service areas brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	–	End of year 1
Reduce phone calls in new service areas brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	10% 30%	End of year 2 End of year 3
Increase solving requests first time for existing contact centre functions	82%	95%	End of year 3
Establish level of requests solved first time within the new service areas brought into customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	–	End of year 1
Increase solving requests first time for new service areas brought into the customer fulfilment team	Not currently measured	95%	End of year 3
Develop end to end service specific measures for new service areas brought into customer fulfilment team	–	–	End of year 1

*cumulative

Measure	Baseline	New Target	Timescale
Establish social media (including website) measures for customer fulfilment functions	Not currently measured	–	End of year 1
Harnessing digital technology We will help customers serve themselves and reduce the amount of manual handling of transactional services			
Increase fully automated process to existing online forms	Not currently measured	50%	End of year 3
Increase automation through RPA to process currently in contact centre		50%	End of year 3
Increase total number of payment transactions online	Not currently measured	95%	End of year 3
Reduce number of cheques	9,732	20% 30%	End of year 2 End of year 3
Realising the power of data We will join up our data and use it our customers advantage; moving towards predictive service delivery			
Implement a data observatory model	–	–	End of year 1
System Data Cleanse across all customer focussed systems	–	100%	End of year 3
Produce interpretive Data Sets for service areas	–	–	End of year 3

Customer Experience – Our Journey So Far

Over the past 7 years we have strived to improve the way we work to meet the needs of our Customers. We have implemented some key improvements to the way customer interact with us and how we communicate with them, this includes:

A text messaging service to remind you about things like council tax payments or when a repair is being completed on your property

A new website where you can access a range of online services and information

An online account where you can view your council tax and housing benefit information

A "right first time" approach to resolving problems with the aim of reducing avoidable contact with the Council in a number of key services areas such as Housing Repairs, Adult Social Care, Council Tax and Registrars

We hold joint awards of the Customer Contact Association (CCA) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE) where we achieved a Silver Award this year.

Our telephone service

We have improved what we can offer on the telephone. Our Contact Centre can now be used to report a birth or death, to book a marriage or assist with enquiries on school admission applications. We developed a first point of access for Adult Social Care and this team has brought together a range of services that can be offered on the telephone.

In 2018/19 the Contact Centre dealt with 233,744 telephone calls. There is an out of hours telephone service so that our customers can contact us if there is an emergency need.

Our face to face service

Our face to face team provide services within our Customer Hub, which was refreshed in 2015 when we moved to our current premises in Bridge Street. This team can deal with a wide range of services and we have seen around 27,700 customer visits in 2018/19 with average wait times falling from 30 to 15 minutes.

Customers can also come into the Customer Hub and use our self-service computers to access Council services and some Department of Work and Pension services.

Online and Digital Services

Our improved web platform allows customers to transact with us through the use of self-service forms and a citizen account. We have also implemented a Customer Relationship Management system (light-version) within our Customer Services team. This has allowed the team to complete the same version of a form that a customer can complete, with some integration into back end systems for Council Tax & Benefits customers.

Customer Care Commitments

We published our Customer Service Standards in 2014 which sets out our approach and commitment to Customer Service. This has now been update with more ambitious targets.
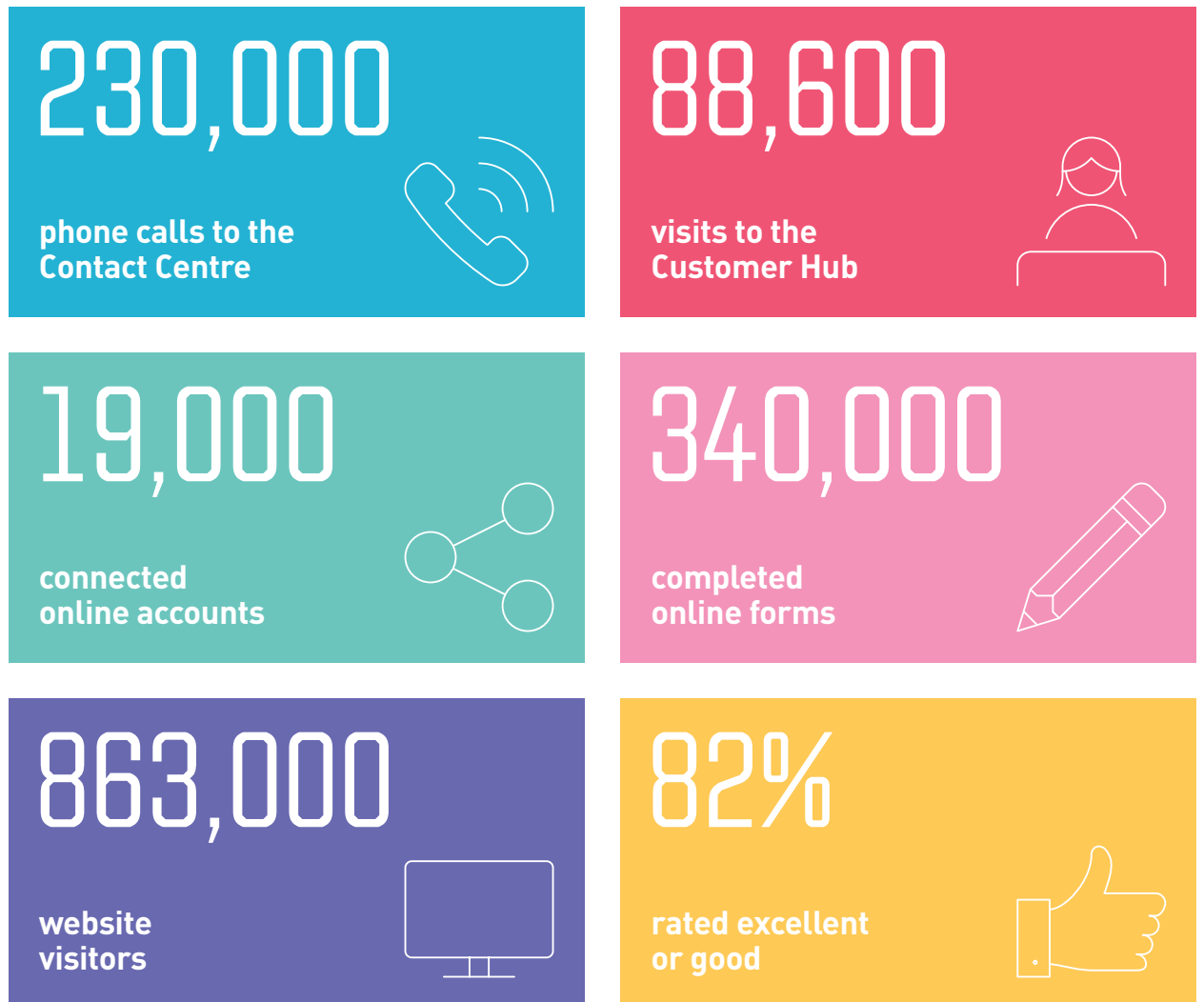
Increased satisfaction

Our Customer Services team carry out monthly satisfaction surveys. In 2018/19 our customers scored us on average excellent or good (82%) on how their request was dealt with, this has seen an increase of 10% since 2012.

We are proud of this continuous record of improvement, especially in financially challenging times, but we know there is much more we can and need to do.

Our Current Customer Experience in Numbers

The diagram below shows the numbers of interactions our customers have with both the Customer Contact Centre and the Customer Hub:

230,000
phone calls to the Contact Centre

88,600
visits to the Customer Hub

19,000
connected online accounts

340,000
completed online forms

863,000
website visitors

82%
rated excellent or good

This data does not tell us about other key areas of customer service we deliver across the council, or about the interactions our customers have with other back office teams such as tenants services, parking, bus lane enforcements, green waste collections, empty properties and housing advice as these are not reported on in the same way as our Customer Contact Services. Other areas of the Council can sometimes operate to different customer service standards and this creates confusion for our customers and a different customer experience.

Current Challenges and opportunities for change

Organisation Design
Although customer contact for many services has been consolidated into the Customer Hub, Contact Centre and corporate website this is not true of all services. We currently have technical/specialist resource delivering simple and supported customer transactions outside of the Customer Services function, which could be automated or delivered through the new customer fulfilment team.

We want our technical expert resource to focus on customer service delivery that is within their specialist area; these types of customer services often require professional human intervention and qualified advice that is specialised and often provided to customers with higher need.

The view of our customers is fragmented across the organisation. We sometimes fail to recognise that any one person can be a customer of multiple services across the Council. We have varying standards of delivery and we are inconsistent in how we measure the service we provide.

We often transfer customers from the front-end customer service operator to a 'back office' team when all they require is simple transactional support or signposting. This creates a delay for the customer; their experience is not consistent and can mean issues are not resolved first time round – resulting in the customer contacting us again seeking a solution.

Process
We have undertaken process review and designs within services. However, processes are often designed in isolation from others and do not start with the goal of mapping and simplifying the journey for the customer. In some cases we have created a point at which a request is passed (or 'handed off') from a front-end customer service team to a back-office technical team, which can create confusion, delays or errors. Many processes remain manual and while an online form is provided for the customer, the information is not passed directly to back office systems, resulting in additional handling and errors creeping in.

Customer Standards
A consequence of our current customer services model is that there is no consistently applied service design or standards. This is true of both how we transact with customers in terms of processes, for example different teams can choose which channels of contact they offer or payment options and also our service offer in terms of response times and opening hours.

Digital
The Council has implemented a self-service oriented Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that includes a customer account and workflow capability, however there remains numerous standalone self-service portals for many other services. This means customers have to remember lots of different logins, the overall user experience is disjointed and often customers end up calling the council as they need support to do simple transactions, such as paying for a bill, because the system is not user friendly.

There is limited integration between the online forms, the CRM and back office systems used by different services. Therefore Customer Service staff have to use multiple systems, often re-enter data and tracking customer requests is made more difficult.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) provide additional opportunities to route and manage customer requests and transactional services, improving accuracy and reducing cost.

Data
As a local authority we sit in the middle of a web of information. The range and diversity of our services (from social care, waste collection, council tax collection to planning applications etc), generates a huge quantity of data held about our customers and across a variety of back office systems.

At the moment our data is held in silos, sat in back office systems that do not speak to each other. Understanding what our data says about our customers and service delivery is therefore challenging as we have no single view. Hence it not being used effectively to improve the services we offer in a meaningful or strategic way.

Understanding our data is hugely beneficial in helping us to; make services more targeted and effective; allocate resources to where we can have the biggest impact; save officer time in front and back office processes, as well as providing insight into the causes of and solutions to costly social problems.

Corporate plan, vision and mission – golden thread

"We will ensure that Reading realises its potential as a great place to live, work and play, and that everyone shares the benefits of this success".

We will achieve this by working together across the Borough collaboratively with residents, local businesses, wider public sector bodies and the voluntary and community sector organisations. That's why our corporate brand is Working Better with you, and it's why we will involve and consult residents to help set the direction of the Council's decisions and the development of Reading.

Our corporate plan outlines six priorities that are central to achieving Reading's mission:

2 Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs

3 Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children

1 Securing the economic success of Reading

4 Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe

6 Ensuring the Council is Fit for the Future

5 Promoting health, education, culture and wellbeing

Our Customer Experience Strategy will align to our corporate priorities, with its drivers aiming to ensure:

Our customers will be able to connect with us at the time and place they choose. They will only need to tell us once and will be confident that we will get it right first time. Every interaction will be a positive experience: better, faster, simpler.

A golden thread ties together the Customer Experience Strategy to our Corporate Plan aspirations by embedding a Customer Experience Philosophy into the Council.

1

Achieving Customer Service Excellence

By putting customers at the heart of what we do we will create a better day for them and deliver a positive Customer Experience. We will do this by making sure that the following customer outcomes are achieved. "As a customer I want to..."

→ Contact the council easily through one number, without having to hunt for different numbers

→ Not be transferred to multiple advisors

→ Transact with the council using fast, efficient and easy to use integrated online services when its convenient for me

→ See my transaction history and be reminded of appoints

→ Get my issue resolved the first time I get in touch

→ Use mobile to find information quickly and carry out my request on the go, at a time that suits me.

→ Receive support by telephone or face to face if I am vulnerable and need to speak to an advisor or specialist.

→ Escalate issues easily should something go wrong with my transaction or service being delivered and know that I will get a response.

→ Locate easy, clear and accessible information on the Councils website

→ Use secure online payment methods that enable me to set up my payment preferences and subscriptions in one place.

→ Use automated telephony to transact and make payment without needing to speak to an advisor or specialist

→ Get in touch once when I need to change details like my address, and expect the Council to link its systems to share that information across all my records

→ Be treated with respect, ensuring whatever the outcomes of the service being delivered, I feel I have been treated fairly.

2

**Adopting
a mindset
and promise**

Our "Customer promise" defines the way that all our staff across the council will deal with customers, whether they are residents, businesses, partners or suppliers.

We will help our customers make the most of every contact with us. We will use every contact as an opportunity to add value to the customer, which includes; promoting another service that could benefit them, promoting public health messages to increase awareness, linking up the information we hold about them to ensure they are getting the support they need.

Every Reading Borough Council employee will adopt a customer focussed mindset and promise, regardless of the service they work in.

Our staff have a responsibility to ensure they deliver on our customer promise.

Our values and promise

Take responsibility	→ Accept responsibility for service delivery
	→ Fulfil our customer promises
	→ Set clear expectations about service delivery
	→ Deliver what has been promised
Be open, honest and respectful	→ Be open and honest when dealing with customers
	→ Act morally and ethically, treat customers with dignity and respect
	→ Be friendly, helpful, professional and courteous
	→ Be clear and concise and transparent in communications

Work together to find solutions	→ Identify solutions to address customer concerns
	→ Actively seek to resolve customer concerns
	→ Aim to get things right first time
	→ Understand the customers point of view
Listen and learn	→ Enable customers to give feedback on processes and services
	→ Listen to and acknowledge customer concerns
	→ Apologise when we get it wrong
	→ Learn from our mistakes
Customer promise to us	→ Treat our staff with dignity and respect. We will not tolerate violence or unreasonable behaviour directed towards our staff
	→ Tell us about your change in circumstances
	→ Let us know what you think of our service

Our service standards

Core standards	→ Aim to have your service request or complaint resolved by the first person you contact
	→ Give you one main telephone number to contact us
	→ Aim to answer your call in 60 seconds
	→ Aim to see you within 15 minutes of arriving at the Customer Hub
	→ Respond to email within 24 hours
	→ Respond to social media messages within 2 hours
	→ Open our phone lines from 9 - 5 Monday to Friday
	→ Investigate customer complaints within 15 days

3

Involving the whole organisation

For us to deliver the Customer Experience strategy, we need to change our internal Customer Service model. We will bring together our multiple customer service teams into one, highly-skilled Customer Fulfilment Team. We will equip these frontline staff to deal with a range of issues when the customer first gets in touch, without needing to pass them onwards unless the issue is highly technical. We will make better use of digital to provide customers with more opportunities to resolve issues themselves through self-service, and with better support to complete transactional services.
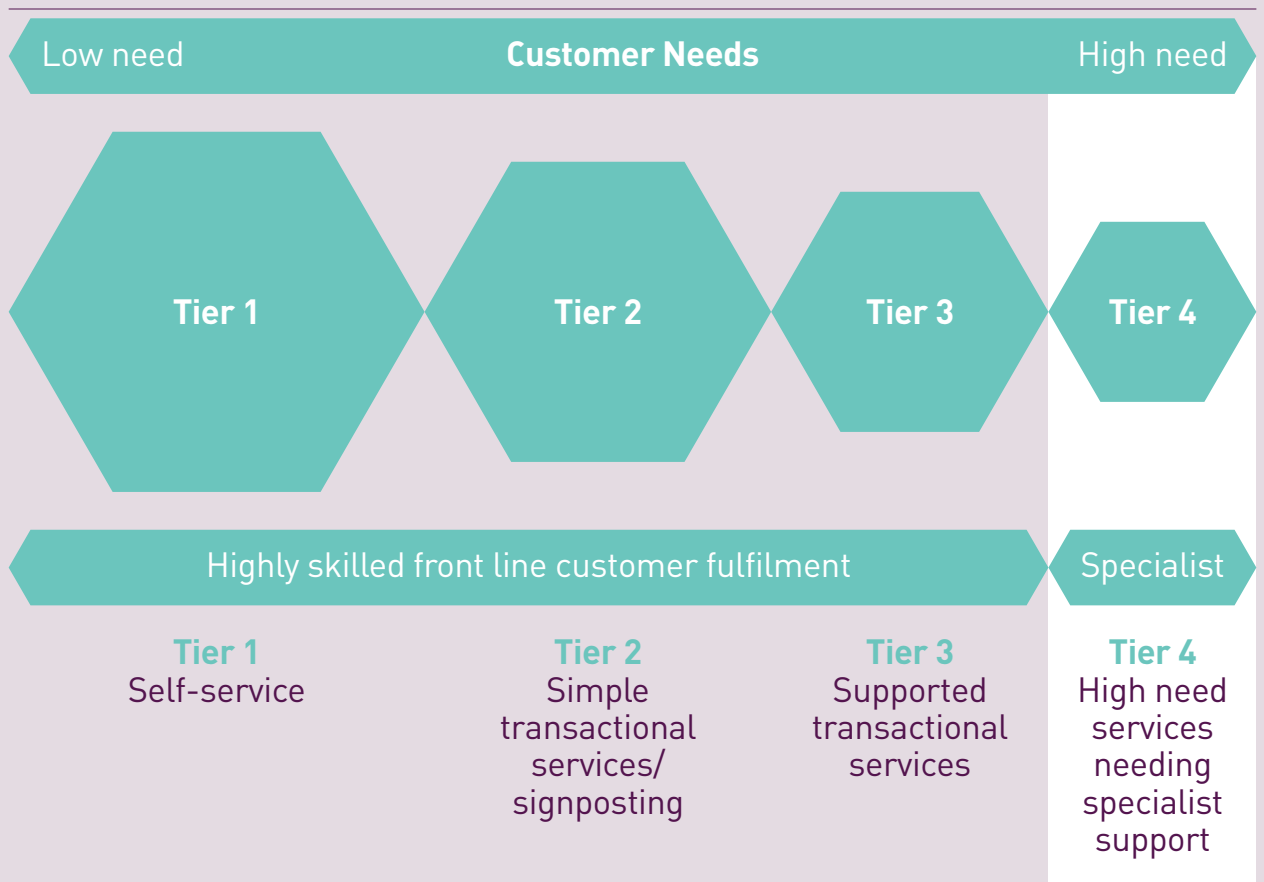
We will therefore build a frontline 'Customer Fulfilment' team.

Customer fulfilment has a number of different facets including:

→ Doing what we said we'd do, first time

→ Leaving your customer feeling good about the service they have received

→ Completing a transaction or request for service without fuss, simply and quickly

→ Even we have to say NO, leaving the customer feeling they have been treated professionally, fairly, listened too, and respected

→ Letting customer interact with us, at time that is convenient to them

→ Aiming for amazing

→ Dealing with a request or resolving an issue first time, no hand offs where possible

In our current Customer Service model, many simple transactional functions are being delivered within back office teams using specialist resource. This creates inconsistencies in the customer experience and costs us time and money. By bringing these transactional functions together into one front-line customer service we can refocus our specialist resource onto the delivery of technical and complex needs of our customers.

The diagram below shows the new Customer Fulfilment model we will move to, which is based on a best practice model of moving the service provision as close to the customers as possible:

| Low need | **Customer Needs** | High need |

| **Tier 1** | **Tier 2** | **Tier 3** | **Tier 4** |

| Highly skilled front line customer fulfilment | Specialist |

Tier 1	**Tier 2**	**Tier 3**	**Tier 4**
Self-service	Simple transactional services/ signposting	Supported transactional services	High need services needing specialist support

Moving to this Customer Fulfilment model will mean that self-service becomes the primary channel for our customers to interact with us. High volume transactional, processing and assessment services will be brought together and managed in one place within the Council.

This model of delivery will ensure that our customers engage with us at the most appropriate point to support their need. We will analyse all our transactional service delivery functions and profile this against the tiers described in the diagram above.

By bringing these transactional and fulfilment functions together into one operational service, means that our technical specialists can be refocussed on delivery of more complex needs of our customers.

The Customer Fulfilment model aims to deliver:

→ A consistent customer experience across all channels across the Council

→ Roles and structures designed around customer and business need

→ A more efficient delivery of transactional processing activity and enquiries with in a new Customer Fulfilment team which ensures customers have the information they need straight away and the vast majority of issues are resolved on first point of contact

→ Redesigned processes which are customer focussed, end to end, standardised, efficient, simple to use and intuitive, reducing transfers of requests between teams

→ Like processes brought together in one place

→ Optimised use of digital in service design including use of digital channels and driving channel shift

→ Services that are accessible for all

→ A secure service which protects users privacy

4
Putting the customer at the heart of service and processes

Our Customers will be at the heart of redesigning our services.

We will look through the lens of the customer to ensure the design meets their needs.

In our design we will:

→ Redesign our processes from end to end, reducing the number of times we transfer customers between teams and focussing on resolving issues at the first point of contact

→ Increase self-service and automate first (where appropriate)

→ Remove unnecessary bureaucracy

→ Standardise transactions and bring like processes together in one place

→ Identify appropriate channels for service delivery – while the majority of customer will be encouraged to access services online, we will provide alternative channels those who need additional support (e.g. face to face appointments)

→ Move to one telephone number to simplify how our customer contacts us

→ Ensure services are inclusive and respond to equality needs

→ Ensure our policies are customer focussed

→ Enable customers to give feedback on processes and services

→ Ensure customers are involved in the development of our services and the redesign process

→ Improves the efficiency of our services which will ultimately reduce costs and increase quality

→ Use the data we hold about our customer to inform the way we improve processes and deliver our services

→ Eliminate paper where possible responding to our declaration of a climate emergency

5

Harnessing digital technology

The Customer Experience strategy will seek to embed a digital experience outside and inside the Council.

To make this happen we will:

→ Make online channels convenient and easy to use so that customers choose this as their preferred method of contact with us

→ Redesign online forms to enable system integration and automation

→ Utilise new technology, such as artificial intelligence to deliver services

→ Develop and increase use of instant messaging such as webchat

→ Increase use of social media channels

→ Use the telephone for supported and complex transactions only

→ Use voice recognition to help customers find services more quickly

→ Only use face to face where we need to meet complex and specific customer needs

As we implement well designed and accessible digital services we will:

→ Remove use of unformatted email as a method of customer contact

→ Phase out use of telephone for low need and simple transactions, unless using voice recognition

→ Phase out use of face to face service for low need and simple transactions

→ Reduce significantly or stop printed correspondence e.g. letters, permits supporting our climate change emergency agenda

Artificial Intelligence – is increasingly entering our customer's homes and now provides a new channel to access services.

For example voice recognition technology is becoming part of everyday lives. They are programmed with key service information so that they build up a knowledge base, referring to this information to provide responses to customer enquiries.

AI can also be used by the council to interpret trends, clean data and answer customer enquiries 24/7.

Robotic Process Automation – Integration of robotics into customer service delivery is entering into local councils. It aims to free up our people from repetitive tasks, so that they can focus on customer value adding activities. This is an area that we are looking to pilot in the near future to support 24/7 customer service delivery.

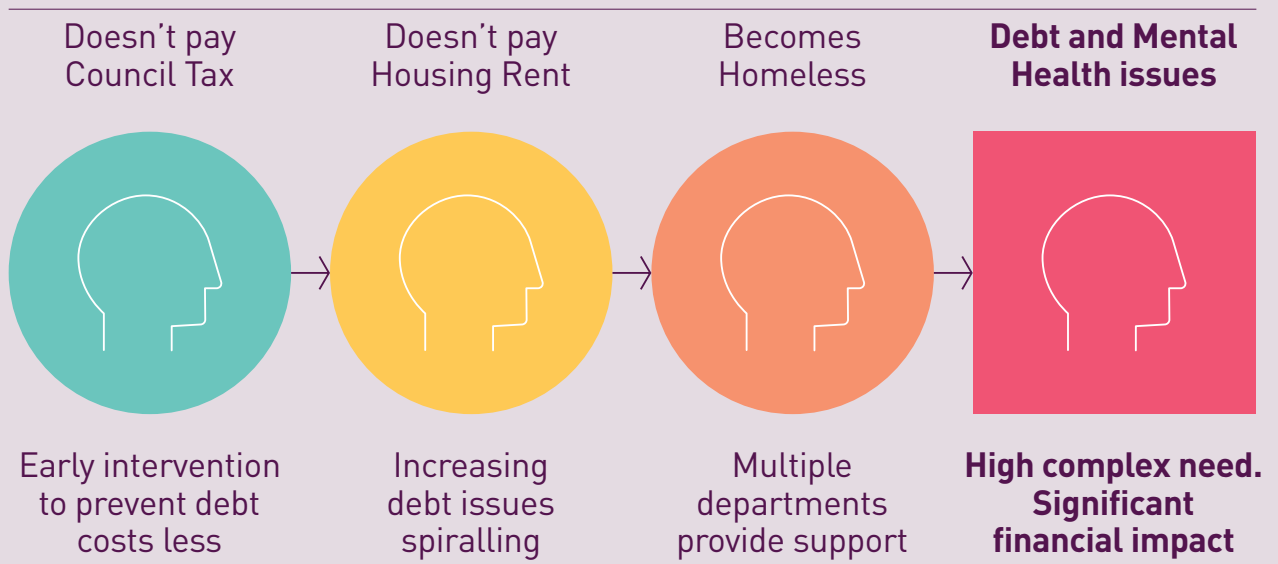These new and emerging technologies are capable of processing high volume requests, with 100% accuracy 24/7.

6

Realising the power of data

We will join up the data we hold across different systems and services, and use it our customers' advantage.

We will aim to create a 'golden record' of our customers so we can see all their data in one place and not ask them to repeat their information to us for different transactions.

We will use data to better plan the shape and size of our services according to need and demand, and to move towards designing services that predict customers' needs based on what the data tell us.

The diagram below shows how using our data better can help us be more pre-emptive in the action we take to support customers:

Doesn't pay Council Tax	Doesn't pay Housing Rent	Becomes Homeless	**Debt and Mental Health issues**
Early intervention to prevent debt costs less	Increasing debt issues spiralling	Multiple departments provide support	**High complex need. Significant financial impact**

For example – If a customer does not pay their council tax, let us act early to intervene and work with them to understand their financial situation. If the Customer can't pay their council tax it is very likely they can't pay their rent, which could lead to their debt spiralling and leaving them homeless.

This puts more pressure on already stretched council services and clearly leads to poor outcomes for our customers. Linking up our data and view of the customer means we can intervene early and prevent a distressing and costly problem.

Our aim is to start to:

→ Bring together the data we hold in different places to create a single 'golden record' of each customer, so that customers can tell us information once and it will be correct in all our systems

→ Analyse our data better, creating a culture where it is integral to our decision making processes

→ Break down the barriers by sharing our data across services to benefit the customer

→ Move towards predictive service design and delivery

→ Size our services according to need and demand

→ Make sure that all out data we hold is accurate, up to date and well governed

→ Make data transparent to the customer, being specific about the circumstances and purposes we will use their data

We will develop a data strategy to support embedding "the power of data" work stream within the Customer Experience Philosophy.

Our Journey

We will embed this strategy over 3–4 years.

The diagram below sets out an indicative but ambitious approach to delivering the Customer Experience Strategy. Each element of the journey needs to be assessed individually to ensure it is responsive to the fast changing environment of digital and what our customers expect as their customer experience.

To support our journey we need to ensure that we have the IT enablers in place to support our new Customer Fulfilment model and embed the Customer Experience Philosophy across the Council.

Our Journey

Year 1

IT enablers in place
→ Applications review and roadmap
→ Implement new IT operating model
→ Define new IT strategy

Customer Experience Strategy agreed
→ Service & process redesign (phase 1)
→ Close unstructured email
→ Initial development single sign on customer portal
→ Telephone voice recognition
→ Data intelligence team
→ Website completion
→ Publish customer promise
→ Continue development of online forms
→ One Council phone number
→ Robotic Processing proof of concept
→ Corporate Performance framework and tool embedded
→ Customer Experience training all staff

Year 2

→ Service & process redesign – rolling programme of transformation (phase 2)
→ Transparent customer data promise
→ More automation of online forms
→ Strategic data solution & strategy
→ Develop Robotic Process Automation & Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools
→ Adult Services market place
→ Culture change embedding
→ Master Data management

Year 3

→ Service & process redesign – rolling programme of transformation (phase 3)
→ Integrated customer portal
→ 24/7 webchat/social media using AI
→ Predictive Service Design using our data
→ Golden Record

Who are our Customers?

Reading is the principal regional and commercial centre of the Thames Valley, a major retail and leisure destination, with a thriving night-time economy.

There has been a huge shift in the town's economy, from its origins in 'beer, biscuits and bulbs' to a compact service economy which specialises in business and insurance services, and has some of the finest high-tech business parks in the South East, with many international companies such as Microsoft and Oracle choosing Reading as their home.

The town is a major transport interchange, continuing to benefit from its strategic location on the M4 corridor and proximity to Heathrow Airport and London. Reading is also home to the University of Reading and Reading College, with a large percentage of the local working population highly skilled.

Reading is a place with huge potential, second only to London for wages; it has above average economic productivity and rates of employment. Yet Reading is now the third most unequal city in the UK, with significant groups not benefiting from the success of the economy, and with rising demand for housing, and for services to support vulnerable adults and children.

Reading has some of the most affluent and the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of the Thames Valley, which are often masked by statistics at borough and even ward levels.

Currently 163,203 residents and 68,770 households live within the Reading borough boundary, while around 318,014 people live in Reading's greater urban area. The population is estimated to increase by 10% by 2039.

The proportion of older people is predicted to increase, with the proportion aged 60+ predicted to rise from 10.9% in 2016 to 22.3% by 2039.

The number of households is predicted to rise to 77,000 by 2039.

Reading has a very diverse population, with 35% now belonging to a Black and Minority Ethnic community, the third highest proportion in the South East after Slough and Oxford.