



Middlesbrough Council  
Customer Strategy 2024

Every Contact Matters - Delivering Excellence



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# Foreword

As a Council our focus is on working with local people, businesses, and partners to deliver the best possible services in a rapidly changing world.

Like councils up and down the country, Middlesbrough faces many challenges, but my administration is committed to recovering, resetting, and delivering for the people of the town.

Work to reduce the cost of delivering our services and recover our financial position is well under way, and that will enable us to reset our priorities and focus on delivering what matters to local people.

To do that we need to engage with and listen to local residents and the business community and that approach is at the heart of our new Customer Strategy.

We are transforming and modernising to meet the changing needs, expectations, and aspirations of our customers, delivering services that are efficient, timely, personalised, proactive and connected.

That means ensuring people can engage with us at their convenience, on any device and we will be there to support those who need extra help to access services.

When things do go wrong we will act quickly, courteously acknowledge, and aim to resolve the issue.

Central to this will be the effective use of technology to speed up and simplify transactions and make 'self-service' available wherever possible, while retaining the appropriate points of contact for those in need.

The customer will, of course, remain at the heart of everything we do, from how we design services to how we respond to feedback, enabling us to work smarter, deliver better value for money and provide the first-class customer experience the people of Middlesbrough deserve.

**Chris Cooke**  
Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough



# Customer Strategy On a Page

Our brand-new customer strategy will provide high quality and modern customer services based on the following core themes to achieve our key objectives:



# Introduction

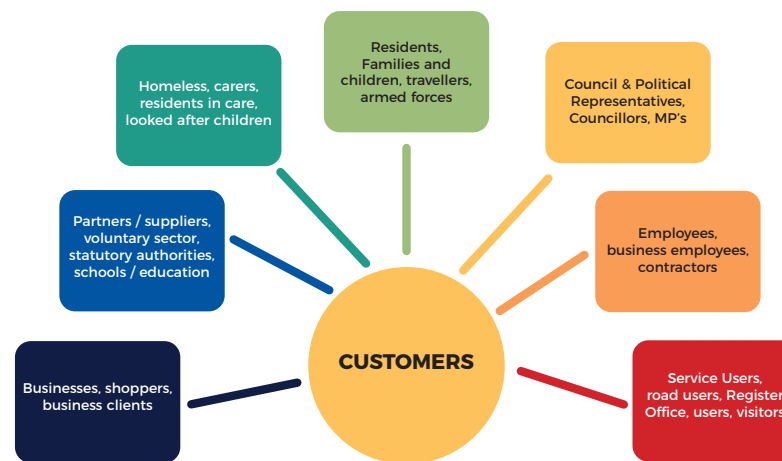
Excellent customer service is not just a service, it's a mindset, an attitude even! Delivering excellent customer service is very important to us and to do this we need to change. Our Customer Strategy is designed to harness our people, process, and technology to create an excellent experience across all our services that is recognised and valued by our customers.

We define our customers as anyone who interacts with us: our residents, businesses, vulnerable groups, Council employees, service users, partners etc.

Aligned to the Council Plan priorities and the Mayor's vision, our new strategy aims to ensure that 'Every Contact Matters'. We will organise our services around the needs of our customers, providing consistent high-quality affordable services

that optimises the thousands of day-to-day interactions that we have with our customers by following a 'one council' approach.

Connecting with us will be timely and more convenient, we will aim for every interaction to be a positive one; better, simpler, providing resolution at the earliest opportunity. Our business processes will be designed around our customers and provide consistency in accessing information, through the route which best suits customer needs. With access to the latest digital technology too, all of this will be aligned to our brand-new Target Operating Model.



## Customer and The Relationship With Neighbourhood and Services

The new strategy sits alongside our other operating models and strategies to transform the way we work. For example, our Customer Strategy will provide appropriate resource to support our Neighbourhood model whilst retaining an overarching centralised customer service delivery model to ensure opportunities continue to support residents in the most appropriate way and efficiencies within our operations are optimised.

The Customer Strategy incorporates our corporate Welfare Strategy, which is an intrinsic element of the customer journey as it is also designed to provide the most appropriate support to residents, when necessary, who may be experiencing financial issues. This ensures we can provide early interventions and avoid financial issues escalating.

The new approach will also provide clear routes to be able to escalate more complex issues into our services and Neighbourhood through a tiered approach as outlined in the Target Operating Model as shown.

Where matters are raised directly with services and/or Neighbourhood directly, early assessment of the individual needs are essential to determine if it is a wider complex issue, or whether resolution can be managed and delivered through the customer model. The majority of interactions with the Council will be managed through the Customer model and where appropriate, escalation/routes to services/Neighbourhood will take place to respond to complex and deep set matters that may often require a multi service response.

For example - where a resident approaches the Council with a number of requests, needs, issues etc. these will be assessed at the first point of interaction e.g. the customer approaches the Council with four issues that need resolving (1) Applying for planning permission online, (2) speaking about their council tax bill (3) Making a claim (4) Struggling with a health/family matter. The first 3 issues will be dealt with under the Customer model, the 4th Matter will be referred to the relevant Service. The Service may have a presence in the Neighbourhood and as such the matter will be referred to the Neighbourhood through an appropriate escalation route.

Contact with the Council will be on the basis of the customer need. The majority of interactions will continue to be online or over the phone, with face-to-face interactions offered where vulnerabilities are identified, or the matter requires multi disciplined teams to collectively respond. Direct engagement of customers may also be undertaken by the Council as services seek to engage with hard to reach groups or reach out to vulnerable customers.

## Where We Are Now

In 2023/24 over 125,000 calls were made to the Council's Customer Centre. There were over 4,700 in-person visits. Our website had over 2.9 million visitors (although only 120,000 customer accounts have been created using our online system to date – this is an area we need to explore further). 90% of our customers rated us as very helpful when feedback was requested through some of our phone calls and digital services. However, this is only a small proportion of the Council interactions with customers that are captured through systems that are utilised by the Customer centre, we do so much more.

Across the organisation we know that we have multiple 'front doors', inconsistency with information and messages, services working in isolation and only partial joint working. Technology is limited and not always fit for purpose and our customer and business processes are not always customer focused which may in part have contributed to the increase in complaint levels seen over the last few years.

Council resources have reduced which has led to overstretched services and some of our customers who are in need have not been able to access the specialist support required.

Whilst we accept we can do better; we do in places get it right! The Council's Revenues and Benefits Service has held Customer Service Excellence for over 25 years – a national quality mark that seeks to recognise organisations that have a truly customer focused culture.

The service is independently assessed annually against the following criteria: Customer Insight, Culture of the Organisation, Information and Access Delivery and the Timeliness & Quality of Service. In the most recent assessments, the service retained their accreditation and progressed to an 'elite' level standard.

Further evidence of good practice can be seen within our Neighbourhood teams for the support they provide to the people in Middlesbrough in our localities and our Register Office team for their continual exceptional feedback.

## Why We Need To Change

We acknowledge this level of service is not consistent across the whole organisation, however it is a firm foundation from which to build and raise our standards across all service areas.

Understanding the demographic profile is also important and informs how we manage and deliver services. Middlesbrough has a young, diverse and growing population and plays a huge part in how we meet the needs of the community and maintain community cohesion. High levels of economic inactivity and low numbers of owner occupied properties increase pressure on services, furthermore high levels of child poverty continue to provide a fundamental challenge in how we improve families' lives as well as maintain our financial sustainability.

With thousands of contacts each year from residents, businesses, vulnerable households, and the ability to use this contact to support, signpost, deliver, advise, whilst understanding the needs of our customers comprehensively provides an ideal opportunity to make every contact matter and improve the way we support our residents in this changing landscape. In addition, understanding the makeup of our communities and considering how we engage with hard-to-reach groups and those customers in our community that need public services but where there are barriers in the way such as language will be important to identify.

Reducing unnecessary effort, avoiding duplication, and providing streamlined business processes will also support the Council to contain its costs within its available income and to achieve a position of financial sustainability over the medium-term financial plan.

# Current Economic & Social Characteristics

Middlesbrough has a significant proportion of wards within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) most 10% deprived communities. This creates a disproportionate reliance on public services and a much lower resilience to hardship or economic impacts than experienced in other areas as illustrated in the demographic's key facts diagram.

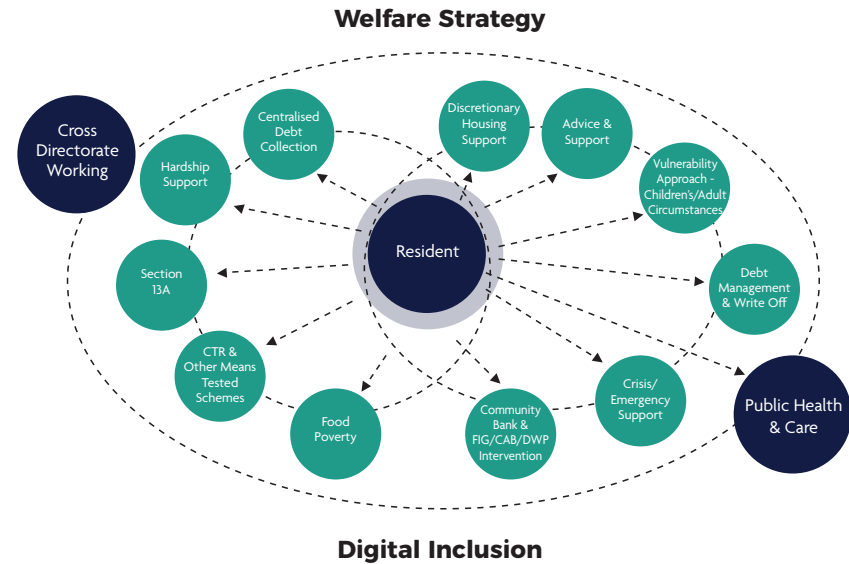
Our new Customer Strategy forms an integral part of the Council's approved Transformation Portfolio, aligning with the strategic priorities of our Mayor and the Council Plan (2024-27). It links with several of the Council's strategies including Corporate Vulnerability Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Economic and Business Support Strategy, Digital Inclusion, People and ICT Strategy, and the Public Health South Tees Strategy and the Corporate Welfare Strategy.

The Welfare Strategy is a 'toolbox' which is designed to trigger support when necessary for residents who may be experiencing financial issues. The basis of this Strategy is to prevent wider financial issues from forming. Through a comprehensive strategy which provides financial assistance, advice and support early resolve is fundamental. Through proven delivery successes this approach is already working extremely well.

Middlesbrough has a resident population of over 140,000 but serves as a district centre for the wider Tees Valley region, which has a population of 664,000, rising to circa 2.7 million, within 60 minutes' drive time.

Through the Council's Customer Strategy and every step of the customer journey, the needs of our

customers will be evaluated against the Welfare Strategy, as shown:



**Demographics**  
143,900 Population 4% increase (3rd largest % increase in NE), 60,262 Households. Most densely populated Local Authority area in North East

**Homes and Education**  
55.6% of properties owner occupied, 21.2% private rented, 23.2% social rented. Compared to 80% owner occupied in areas with similar property numbers. 59.5% pass rate at % and above (49.6% national pass rate), 26.6% children in poverty (one of the highest in North East)

**People & Community**  
No of people (65 - 74yrs) rose by around 2800 in 2021 (an increase of 26.2%) No of residents (35 - 49yrs) fell by just under 1700 (6.2% decrease) and 20.8% of the population are aged 0-15yrs. Most ethnically diverse Local Authority area in the Tees Valley, with a British Minority Ethnic population of 17.6% (increase of 51% since 2011)

**Economy**  
63,000 jobs (41,000 FT and 22,000 PT) 64.4% (16-64 yrs) Employment Rate (decreased from 2022) 29.2% Economic Inactivity (16-64 yrs) highest in NE 5.3% Unemployment Rate (16+) (one of highest in NE but has decreased since December 2022 from 5.9%) 4,040 active businesses increased.

Remember - all of the strategies and the Council Plan can be downloaded from our website [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk)

## How We Are Going To Deliver This

We will achieve change by working with existing services to fundamentally review, redesign and reshape all of our customer-facing services in line with our customer led principles and against a backdrop of our key objectives.

The strategy is an integral part of the Council's wider Target Operating Model (TOM) and closely linked with our Neighbourhood approach as mentioned above.

# Customer Target Operating Model

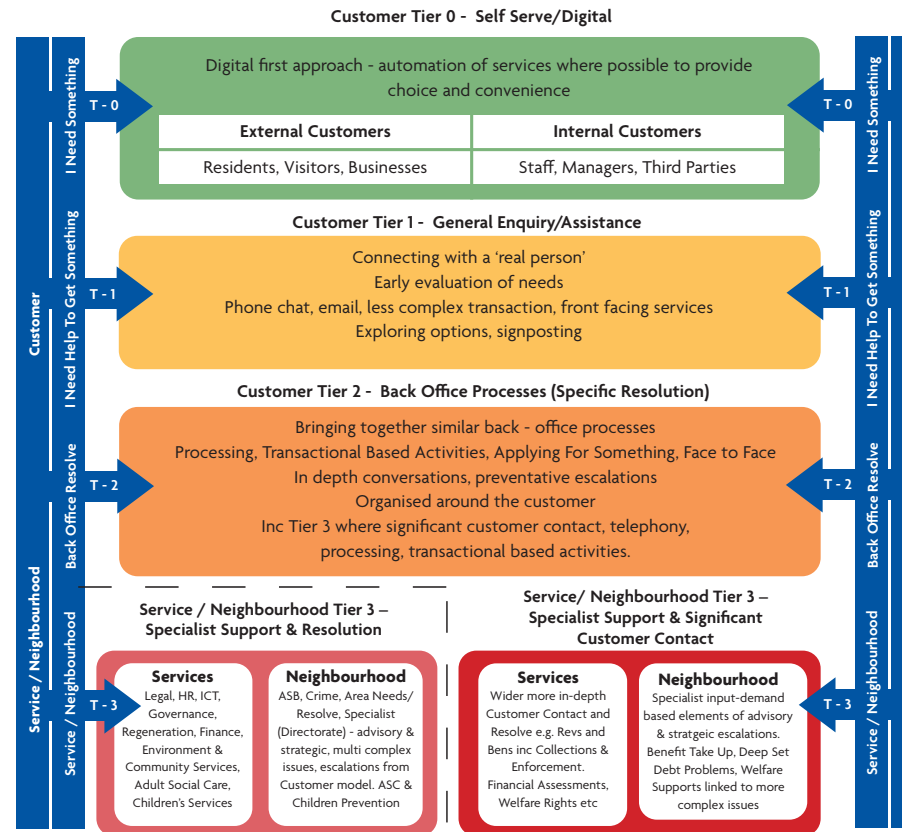
The tiered model, as shown, will aim to provide an improved journey for our customers and work closely with our Neighbourhood approach to provide customers with a more consistent and streamlined experience.

**Tier 0 (I need something)** will ensure that we provide choice and convenience for our customers by analysing our processes and providing an automated easy to use service where possible.

**Tier 1 (I need help to get something)** provides a person to chat over the phone, email, front facing staff etc where needed to assist you with your enquiry.

**At Tier 2 – (I need specific help from back office processing teams)** our high volume transactional, processing and assessment services will be brought together in one place where we can provide a deeper level of back-office processing, identifying, and addressing early triggers to avoid escalations of more fundamental issues/matters. This is often by appointment or pre-arranged discussion.

**Tier 3 (I need help from specialist services)** – will involve access to our specialist support /statutory services, and prevention & complex delivery teams. The teams will be located where there is demand and need, this could be with other delivery partners, in our centralised offices or based in our Neighbourhood localities to provide support directly to our communities.



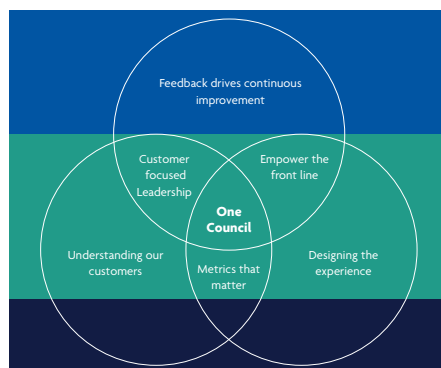
Providing quick and easy online/digital capabilities – ensures the cost of delivery is kept to a minimum. Online channels can be accessed 24/7, customers are not constrained to business hours when wanting to engage with the Council. Where more specific contact is needed for more complex matters, Customers can access our services quickly. Note: over a period of time some of our Services will also be present in our Neighbourhood.



The Council will consistently review demand within Tier 3 to determine if more cost-effective methods can be introduced and that customer issues, needs etc are not escalated unnecessarily to ensure our Neighbourhood services are not overwhelmed and can continue to deliver their high quality services. The tiers and where they fit into your customer experience is explained simply in our 'Simplified Target Operation Model illustration:

# One Council

Using a customer centric approach will mean that we will put our customers at the centre of everything we do. We will ensure that our customers become the focal point for every business decision we make from process design, marketing, and communications to service delivery, our customer journey will be as 'one council'. This ethos will be embedded across all our services. Our ambition is to provide a more positive experience to all our customers at every step of the journey. The diagram illustrates this concept further:



# Design Principles

Our design principles will underpin the way we delivery our business:

**Process** – We will centralise and streamline customer services & business processes to design the experience. We will only retain processes and solutions which are demonstrably effective; that add value to customers; and/or are essential, legally required and/or linked to the Council Plan priorities, all of which will be maintained through robust governance and appropriate controls.

**Automate, Eliminate, Rationalise** – We aim to only enter data once and where appropriate re-use this data multiple times. We will eliminate redundant process steps, minimise the number of times customers are transferred through to other services, eliminate duplication of effort and reduce non value work such as repeated contact for unresolved issues.

**Shape Demand** – We will use data to identify insights and trends, develop policies, interventions, and mechanisms from customer evidence, for future service delivery that meets the needs of the town and our customers.

**Digital by Design** – We will develop and implement self-service capabilities or online channels to provide a 'digital first' approach to ensure online channels are convenient and simple to use; accessible 24/7 and user friendly for residents to access on multiple devices, whilst providing the opportunity for face to face or telephone support solutions where appropriate.

**Gain economies of scale** – We will consolidate similar tasks to activity group specialists, where maximum efficiency and productivity can be leveraged.

**Data and Intelligence** – Metrics matter. We will use performance and intelligence data to maximise delivery capabilities and productivity. Utilising data to provide an insight into behaviours and trends across the town which will inform our policies and how we can respond better to emerging issues. Predictive analytics will also be explored to be able to pre-empt demand and need based upon past resident data and trends.

**Optimise Resources** – We will utilise our talent and provide suitably qualified staff to ensure work is performed correctly the first time around by deploying the right people, at the right level, and in the right place. Our solutions will be designed around our customer and will empower our front line.

**Service Capacity and Demand** – We will ensure that our staff are well equipped to undertake tasks, with operational management ensuring resource capacity is planned to meet demand effectively.

# Our Key Objectives



These are essential as we move towards delivering excellence. Designed to run alongside our Design Principles they will provide clear direction, focused outcomes, and consistency in delivery through our

**Achieving Customer Excellence:** Through a comprehensive approach to delivering customer excellence, we will place the customer at the heart of all our decisions. We will seek to consistently deliver exceptional experiences to customers across all our touchpoints and throughout the customer journey. We will understand our customers, anticipate our customer needs, and consistently deliver value. We will bring together all our customer and business processes (where it improves the customer experience) utilising the Customer Services Excellence standards of Insight, Culture, Information and Access and Timeliness and Quality of Service to apply our 'elite' working practices corporately and not just in one service area:

- Our customers will receive the appropriate outcome; delivered with their best interests in mind.
- Our customers will be heard, appreciated, and valued.
- Our customers will be dealt with in a professional manner.
- Our customer experience will be designed around the needs of our customers.

customer centric approach. The key objectives also make sure that the strategy aligns with the overall aims of the Council:

- Our approach to customer excellence will be an inherent part of the culture of our organisation.

**Putting the Customer at the Heart of What We Do:** Our customers will be at the heart of what we do. Our customer services will be designed from the perspective of the customer, making our services accessible, easy to use, clear and easy to engage with. We will:

- Redesign our processes, reducing the number of times we transfer customers between teams and focus on resolving issues at the first point of contact;
- Make our services inclusive to all – considering how we engage with customers, hard to reach groups and those customers in our community that need public services but where there are barriers in the way such as language.
- Ensure our policies are customer focussed and impact assessments are carried out to ensure that vulnerable groups or customers that have links to protected characteristics are supported appropriately;
- Encourage feedback from our customers to support improvements;

- Create focus groups, seeking feedback to understand where we need to make changes to better improve our customer journey;
- Provide value for money services, removing inefficient processes to reduce costs;
- Continually review the quality of the customer service and business process solutions we deliver;
- Reduce the amount of paper we use and promote digital solutions where appropriate as we respond to our declaration of a climate emergency.

**One Council Approach:** Through our operating models the customer will underpin the way we deliver customer services and business process solutions across the organisation.

**Supported Through Digital Channels** We will provide digital solutions so that customers can interact with the Council 24/7 and without the need for manual interaction. To make this happen we will:

- Make our online channels convenient and easy to use;
- Improve our online forms to ensure system integration and improve automation;
- Utilise new technology, such as artificial intelligence to deliver services;
- Introduce instant messaging such as webchat if appropriate;
- Increase our use of social media channels;
- Provide telephony solutions that can support more complex enquiries;
- Use voice recognition to support customers navigating services more quickly.

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

- Reduce and eventually remove the use of unformatted email as a method of customer contact;
- Reduce the use of telephone contacts for low need and simple transactions where digital channels would be more beneficial.
- Reduce printing, such as letters and move to electronic methods where appropriate to do so;

- Reduce face to face contacts for simple customer enquiries and transactions and divert to digital channels where appropriate to do so.

With the pace of digital change continuing to increase and the Council's increased focus on providing access to services through digital and online channels the Council will continue to explore automation and artificial intelligence. Increased and enhanced use of technology is becoming part of our everyday lives and with new technology emerging this is changing the way customers want to engage with councils. To keep pace the Council will continue to increase and evolve solutions all of which will be supported through our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). Our CRM will provide workflow capabilities to ensure that compatible and comparable business processes are delivered through end-to-end solutions. Technology and digital solutions will be comprehensively assessed and introduced at the right time to ensure they are fit for purpose. Introducing technology in advance of the process redesign can result in technical solutions becoming redundant or out of date. We will ensure these solutions are deployed at the right time to provide an effective customer experience and aligned to good business processes. In all instances we will continue to provide solutions that are supportive of residents who are not able to engage with digital channels.

**Making Services Accessible:** We will ensure our services are accessible by all and where customers are digitally excluded appropriate solutions will be available. We will provide assisted digital support, helping customers with low digital skills or limited access to the internet to engage with the Council. Where digital channels and self-serve solutions are not possible, customers can access specialist services as required and in line with Government guidelines.



**Aim to Get it Right First Time:** We will aim to get things right first time every time and where this is not possible aim to do so at the earliest opportunity. We will provide end-to-end solutions that will reduce the number of repeat calls, reduce the number of complaints, ensure customers only need to tell us once and ensure we provide quality customer services that we can be proud of.

**The Intelligent Use of Data and Information:**

We will improve services in a meaningful and more strategic way through the use of data. We will use data to help us shape customer solutions, understand customer needs, trends, identify trouble spots, and help us anticipate future developments. We will consolidate data in an appropriate way to gain a single view of our customers to help provide more tailored solutions, which will help us spot emerging issues, inform policies and support early interventions and planning.

We will continue to maintain appropriate and relevant data protection measures to retain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of personal data to ensure that the data is used for its intended purpose, however our aim is start to:

- Bring together data we hold in different places to create a single 'Smart Record'.
- 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.
- Use data to shape our services according to need and demand.
- Ensure that the data we hold is accurate, up to date and well governed.
- Develop a data strategy through a dedicated data work stream within the new approach to ensure we protect our customers rights and follow the law.

**Delivering on Our Promise:** Our promise will be developed through the creation of a corporate Customer Charter which will be published on completion. Our staff training programme will be focused on this promise and will aim to enhance the customer experience and our commitment to customers. Our corporate values (as shown) will form the basis of any training and development with our staff and will be introduced into the Charter.

 <p><b>Passion</b></p> <p>We will ensure that our customers have a positive experience, and their needs are met. We aim to address all matters with the first contact 'One and Done'</p>	 <p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p>We will adopt a 'one organisation' approach simplifying processes and providing consistency. We will shape our services around the needs of our customers and involve customers in service improvements</p>	 <p><b>Integrity</b></p> <p>We will be open and transparent and treat everyone with respect. Customers can expect communication and updates on active queries. Where we cannot resolve your issue, we will provide an explanation</p>	 <p><b>Creativity</b></p> <p>We will respond to feedback and try new ideas and new ways of working. We will adopt new technologies communication channels and we will streamline as many processes as possible, making life simpler for you</p>	 <p><b>Focus</b></p> <p>We will be ambitious. We will adopt performance measures to track how we are meeting your needs, and we will change where change is needed. We will aim for excellence and to achieve Customer Service Excellence standard across all of our customer facing services</p>
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# Why Our Customer Strategy Is Important

The Customer Strategy means we can maximise opportunities to respond to the challenges by embedding consistent customer and service delivery which is supported through the Council's key measures of success. Our strategy is based on an early preventative approach which is designed to avoid more complex issues developing in the future.

Equally, focusing on opportunities to improve both customer and business process solutions through redesign, efficiencies and reducing the 'multiple touch points' minimises duplication and encourages more collaboration between services to connect decisions and strengthen working relationships.

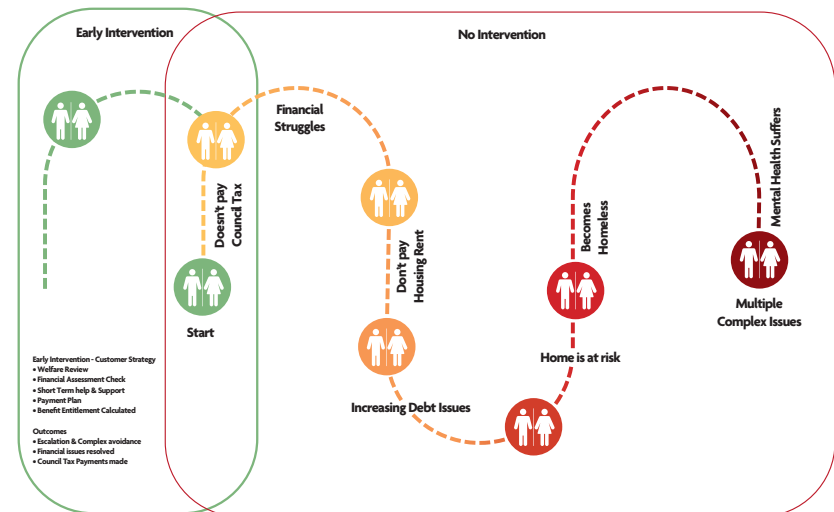
In addition, understanding our data has huge benefits. It will:

- Target needs more effectively;
- Allocate resources to where we can create the biggest impact;
- Reduce processing time;

- Provide an insight into the causes of and the solutions to costly social challenges;
- Use the data to inform how services are designed and delivered.

Linking up our data means that we can also intervene earlier to provide support and prevent potentially distressing and costly issues arising for our customers. Research and experience suggest that if an individual cannot pay a bill such as Council Tax it is very likely that other bills are not getting paid. This may result in debt spiralling and leave an individual or family in a much worse position than anticipated. In some circumstances this could also lead to a homeless situation or criminality.

Identifying root cause problems at the earliest opportunity and applying appropriate early interventions can therefore avoid more serious issues from occurring. This is illustrated in the following diagram:



# Outcomes

The success of the strategy will be measured on the following outcomes:

Outcomes	Indicator	Measure
Enhanced Customer Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased levels of customer satisfaction</li> <li>Improved confidence in Council service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff / resident surveys</li> <li>Number of customer complaints</li> <li>Neighbourhood / Community hub feedback</li> <li>Number of phone calls to contact centre</li> <li>Customer Service Excellence Accreditation</li> </ul>
Reduced Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer feedback</li> <li>Number of end to end solutions in place</li> <li>Reduced number of repeat calls / complaints</li> </ul>
Clear Routes into the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear messaging and consistent information</li> <li>Increase in the number of services available via the Customer 'front door' i.e. the services being taken out of Directorates and under Customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of online information</li> <li>Response times</li> <li>Number of phone calls to contact centre</li> <li>Number of in person visits</li> <li>Customer feedback</li> </ul>
Optimisation of Modern Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of AI/new technologies</li> <li>Improving existing systems</li> <li>Digital Register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced failure demand</li> <li>Number of website visitors</li> <li>Engagement with AI</li> <li>Increased and simplified opportunities for online and telephone payments</li> </ul>
Efficient Business Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation and alignment with the wider Target Operating Model (TOM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution to the Medium Term Financial Plan</li> <li>Online e-form feedback</li> <li>Response and waiting times</li> </ul>
Minimised Handovers Between Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligned and compatible systems across the Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First time resolution,</li> <li>Speed of processing</li> </ul>
Informed Services Able to Respond Pro-actively to Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data managed and tracked using aligned or one CRM system</li> <li>Secure services which protect user privacy</li> <li>Demand for statutory services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One CRM system or aligned systems to manage data 'single view of customer'</li> <li>Appropriate tools in place to analyse data track/monitor and identify trends to provide customer insights</li> </ul>
Improved Response Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced need for customer to make an in person visit</li> <li>Increased number of enquiries processed first time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer / Department feedback</li> <li>Number of in person visits</li> <li>Timely responses</li> </ul>
Long Term Sustainability of the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution to the Medium Term Financial Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordability</li> <li>Budget control</li> </ul>
Motivated and Well Trained Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and Retention</li> <li>Delivery of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Survey</li> <li>Retention of trained staff</li> <li>Opportunities for staff development</li> <li>Staff well-being data (sickness etc)</li> <li>Training and qualifications accessed</li> </ul>

# What Our Customers Can Expect

We will continue to assess and monitor our approach using customer insights and market technology to evolve the customer journey. This is a fundamental change to the way the Council delivers its customer services and will involve some short term changes; however, some of the actions may take longer to implement.

We aim for you to:

- Contact us more easily;
- Transact with us using timely, efficient, and easy-to-use online/digital solutions;
- Locate easy, clear, and accessible information on our website;
- Have an enquiry resolved at the first point of contact or at the earliest opportunity;
- Use mobile technology to find information quickly and carry out your request on the go, at a time that suits; and where assisted digital support is needed know that this will be provided;
- Receive face to face/telephone support where appropriate and need to speak to someone;
- Escalate issues easily should something go wrong;
- Expect departments to link systems to share that information across your records;
- Know that we will act on requests first time;
- Leave with a feeling of satisfaction about the service received;
- Complete a transaction or request for service without fuss, simply and quickly;
- Feel that you have been treated professionally, fairly, listened-to, and respected;

# What We Expect From Our Customers

The Council understands and appreciates that with this level of change things may go wrong from time to time as we transition to our new way of working. Our staff will do all they can to minimise any inconvenience. We will provide timely communications and keep customers fully informed. We expect customers to help us by:

- Being polite and respectful to all our staff;
- Being patient whilst we transform our customer services and business processes;
- Providing us with feedback;
- Letting us know when we get it wrong;
- Providing us with information when requested so we can get things right first time;
- Using our on-line and digital services;
- Being open honest and transparent about needs so we can provide the best possible support and outcomes;
- Helping us to help you.

## Evaluation and Review

The strategy will be implemented initially over a 2 year period through a phased approach as we work across service areas. A number of indicators are already in place to help monitor the objectives of the strategy, and further performance indicators will be added during the life of this strategy. Some of the actions we will be able to implement relatively quickly however more detailed work may be needed around the technology or process related changes therefore this may take longer.

Having adopted the strategy, the existing measures will be reviewed, and if necessary further measures will be added. This action will be completed within 6 months of the strategy going live.

The implementation and effectiveness of this strategy and its supporting policies will be checked and monitored by the Customer Transformation Lead and associated management team. The team will continue to work closely with key services such as Organisational Development, ICT, Communications etc to maintain continuous improvement and ensure the principles of the strategy become embedded into the way we work.

The strategy will be reviewed periodically after 12, 24 and 36 months and if required further plans put in place to continue to be able to deliver our long-term objectives.



[Welfare Strategy | Middlesbrough Council 1 Open Data \(arcgis.com\)](#)

<https://moderngov.middlesbrough.gov.uk/documents/s24032/Report.pdf>

[How life has changed in Middlesbrough: Census 3 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Middlesbrough \(E06000002\) - ONS](#)

[Facts & figures - North East Child Poverty Commission | Every child deserves an equal chance in life. \(nechild-poverty.org.uk\)](#)

## Contact details

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