

**Review of the Customer Care Policy**

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Brenda Hull  
**Responsible Officer:** Head of Customer Services

**Reason for Report:** Review of the Customer care Policy.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**  
**To agree the content of the revised Customer Care Policy**

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** To ensure that people have access to the services they need, particularly those on low incomes and those who are sick or disabled. People also need easy access to information about services at the right time and in the right place whether that is by telephone, website or face-to-face.

**Financial Implications:** None

**Legal Implications:** None

**Risk Assessment:** To ensure all staff represent Mid Devon District Council in a professional and customer focused manor appropriate to the services being provided.

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The Customer Care Policy has not been reviewed since September 2010. The key requirements for providing a good customer service remain unchanged but additional access channels have now become part of our everyday business. The policy has been revised to incorporate these additional contact methods.

1.2 Providing good customer service is important for every employee of Mid Devon District Council, it is not service specific but applies across all services and to all posts.

1.3 This policy sets out the level of customer service that customers can expect from us when using the contact method of their choice.

**2.0 Customer contact targets**

2.1 Our service targets have been reviewed and revised to ensure that with reducing resource and an increase in access channels we can provide a good standard of service to our customers. See appendix 1.

2.2 Customers no longer only contact the council via the three traditional contact methods, face to face, phone and post. Our highest contact channel is now

email, in 2013/14 we received over 800,000 emails. In addition we also receive contacts via on-line forms and social media.

### **3.0 Customer Charter**

3.1 Our customer charter is available in our receptions and is published on our website, it sets out what customers can expect from us and how they can help us to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

### **4.0 Moving forward**

4.1 This policy will underpin the “Channel Access Strategy” that is being developed for digital transformation. Changing technology will not on its own make us more efficient, providing digital services that customer are confident to use and want to use will.

4.2 The digital transformation project will introduce new ways of doing business with the council that we will want to promote as the channel of choice. However it will be essential that traditional access channels continue to be provided for those who are unable to access digital services.

4.3 Where practical the same level of customer service should be applied regardless of how customers chose to contact us, where this is not possible our service targets will be made clear and customers will be aware of the service they can expect.

**Contact for more Information:** Liz Reeves (01884 234371 – lreeves@middevon.gov.uk)

**Circulation of the Report:** Brenda Hull, Jill May, Simon Johnson

**Mid Devon District Council**

**Customer Care Policy**

Policy Number: CUS001CustomercarePolicy

**26.8.2014**

## Version Control Sheet

*Title: Customer Care Policy*

**Purpose: To provide a policy that sets out the service customers can expect when dealing with the council across a range of access channels.**

**Owner: Head of Customer Services**

**[lreeves@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:lreeves@middevon.gov.uk)**

**Telephone number 01884 234371**

**Date: 28.8.14**

**Version Number: 1**

**Status: Final**

**Review Frequency: Every 3 years or sooner if required.**

**Next review date: August 2017**

**Consultation This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**

Management Team

CWB PDG

Cabinet Member

## Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Version Approved</b>
Head of Service	<b>27.08.14</b>	
Management Team	<b>02.09.14</b>	
CWB PDG	<b>16.09.14</b>	
Cabinet	<b>?</b>	

## **1. Introduction**

The council's Corporate Plan sets out the priorities for Mid Devon District Council for the next five years.

The corporate plan identifies issues relating to access to our Services and sets the challenge to:

“Ensure that people have access to the services they need particularly those on low incomes and those who are sick or disabled. People also need easy access to information about services at the right time and in the right place whether that is by telephone, website or face to face.”

To help us fulfil this pledge we have a range of equality and diversity policies and a customer care policy that sets out what customers can expect from us when they contact us for any service.

## **2. Customer Service promise**

We will:

Have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service, and that meet the diverse needs of our customers.

Have staff that are polite & friendly to customers, and have an understanding of customer needs.

Advise our customers and potential customers about our standards and what they can expect from our services in terms of timeliness and quality. (See Appendix 1)

Respond to the initial enquiry promptly and where there are known delays let the customer know why and what action is being taken and whenever possible provide details of the likely overall time to achieve the outcome required.

## **3. Customer Care Charter**

We would like our customers to know the standards and behaviours they can expect from us. A Customer Care Charter has been agreed and sets out how staff will behave when dealing with customers. This is displayed in all of our offices and on the website.

The Charter includes details on how customers can help us to give them the best service possible. (See Appendix 2).

A customer care guide is provided for staff to ensure they understand the importance of providing a good customer service for all customers regardless of how they contact us.

Customer Service awareness is provided to all new staff at induction.

#### **4. Customer Service standards**

We will:

Ensure the standards for our main services are challenging and take into account our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets.

Set appropriate standards for the timeliness of responses across all access channels. (See appendix 1)

Respond to any failure in performance and take appropriate action to bring standards back to the agreed level.

In addition individual services may have standards specific to their particular areas of work (e.g. housing benefit applications, planning applications, grass cutting).

#### **5 Provision of information**

We will:

Protect customers' privacy both in face to face discussions and in the transfer and storage of information.

All staff complete data protection training at induction and have regular updates on their responsibility in relation to the protection of personal information.

Where customers are expected to provide documentation to support applications or for personal identification, we will make it clear what is required and only retain as much data as is required for that purpose.

#### **6. Access and communication**

We will:

Make our services easily accessible to all our customers through the provision of a range of access channels, these include:-

- offices that are open for 40 hours a week,
- a central customer service contact centre for telephone, e-mail and digital contact that is open for 42 hours a week with extended hours provided in partnership with the Devon County Council call centre,
- interactive website with a range of on-line services,
- outreach events at rural community locations
- provide visiting officers where appropriate.
- provide an out of hour's service for 24 hour emergency contact.
- provide Wi-Fi access in our offices and leisure centres.
- provide information on where there is public access to ICT equipment and the internet within Mid Devon.
- provide information on changes to our own services using a variety of channels to engage with customers using channels that suite their needs
- continue to review our access channels and improve how we communicate with customers to ensure we can adapt to changes.

Ensure that where customers visit our premises our facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible, and have access for the disabled, provide hearing loops in our interview rooms and at the service desks and provide signage that is in the most appropriate format for customers with sight impairment.

Where customers require application forms or information about our services, we will provide the information they need in ways that meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.

Details of how to do this for customers are available in a staff guide.

## **7. When it goes wrong**

We will:

Have an easy to use complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully, solve them within agreed timescales and in all cases let the customer know the outcome of the investigation.

For more information please see the complaints policy.

## **8. Staff training**

All staff will receive information at induction on the council's Customer Service Standards and Charter, as well as any service standards that have been set for their own individual service.

Additional training should be provided by their line manager on responding to customers to ensure every member of staff is aware of their own responsibility for providing excellent customers service.

A staff guide on customer service standards is available on SharePoint.

Customer focus and customer service will be discussed with all staff at their annual appraisal.

## **9. Review**

A review of the policy will be carried out every three years.

## Appendix 1 Customer Service targets

Access Channel	Agreed targets	Monitoring arrangements
Telephone – direct dials (calls made to individual officers extensions).	95% of all calls will be answered. Officers will be available during our opening hours or will transfer to a colleague 's voice mail or Customer Services	Telephone call log available from IT. High abandoned rates monitored by Customer First. Exceptions reported to line managers
Telephone to call centre	95% answered, the contact centre is manned from 8.30 to 5.00pm, calls are put into a queue.	Telephone call log available. Monitored by CF. Reported quarterly on Spar and monthly notices posted on the website.
Correspondence received in the post	95% responded to within 10 working days	Scanned items can be monitored on the DMS. Items not scanned will be monitored by exception and mystery shopping carried out by Customer First.
Email	95% responded to within 5 days	Monitored by exception and mystery shopping.
Visitors to reception	95% seen within 15 minutes of arrival.	Queue management reports available and monitored by Customer First.
Visitors with appointments	100% within 10 minutes where the customer has arrived on time.	Monitored by exception.
Complaints	90% Resolved within 10 days or notified of additional time up to maximum of 12 weeks.	Reports from the CRM, monitored by Customer First.
Web forms	100% acknowledged, provided with information of what happens next.	Monitored by Customer First.
Social media	Checked daily and responded to within 24 hours (week days) if response required.	Monitored by Customer First.

**Each service may also have individual service specific targets and PI's, these are monitored on Sparnet.**





## Customer Care Charter

Mid Devon District Council is committed to providing the best customer service we can. We aim to do this by following the standards laid out below, ensuring fair treatment of all in accordance with the diverse needs of our customers.

The Charter outlines our commitment to you.

### **We will:**

- Always be courteous and polite
- Respond to the diverse needs of our customers, adapting our approach as required
- Provide a range of different contact methods to suit your needs, you can call in to our offices, phone, email, use social media, write to us, or use our on line services and where possible we will respond to you in your preferred contact method.
- We will provide access to the internet in our offices.
- Use plain English in all our written correspondence and information
- Apologise if things go wrong and do our best to put things right (please see our complaints procedure)
- Listen to your feedback, act on it and respond

### **How you can help us to help you:**

- By treating us with respect - we will not be able to help you if you are aggressive, threatening, violent or use bad language
- By providing any documentation relating to your enquiry, as required
- By bringing a friend or asking for a translator if needed – we may need to make an appointment to provide this service
- By keeping to your appointment time, or letting us know if you cannot make a pre-arranged appointment
- Letting us know if your contact details have changed

### **We will have:**

- Easily accessible offices, with private interview rooms, wherever possible - please discuss your needs with our staff
- Literature that is easy to understand and provided in other formats if required
- A contact centre open 40hrs a week to respond to calls, e-mails and other digital contacts
- Access to the internet and Wi-Fi in our main offices
- An interactive website available 24/7 for information, and transactions even when our offices are not open
- Regular reviews of our working practices to ensure we are always offering the best service

**These promises are about meeting the needs and expectations of you, our customers, and above all creating a service we can be proud of.**

August 2014

### **3. Related Documents**

- Channel access strategy
- Customer care guide
- Complaints policy