

## **Mid Devon District Council**

### **Customer Care Policy**

**August 2018**

## Version Control Sheet

*Title:* **Customer Care Policy**

*Purpose:* To detail the commitment of Mid Devon District Council in providing an excellent level of Customer service. To also detail the standards that can be expected from the Council and their officers to its customers.

*Owner:* **Group Manager for Business Transformation and Customer Engagement**

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

Group Managers

Leadership Team

Cabinet Member

### Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Version Approved</b>
Group Managers Team	<b>20/08/18</b>	
Leadership Team	<b>04/09/18</b>	
Community PDG	<b>18/09/18</b>	

## **1. Introduction**

Mid Devon District Council ('the Council') is committed to ensuring that customer service excellence is an integral part of the planning, resourcing and delivery of all services.

This policy, in conjunction with others, will ensure that all sections of our diverse community accessing the Council's services will experience consistently excellent customer service.

To help us fulfil this pledge we have a range of equality and diversity policies and this customer care policy sets out what customers can expect from the Council 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 and friendly to customers, and have an understanding of our customers 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 there is a delay, and what action is being taken, and whenever possible provide details of the likely overall time it may take 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 the Council's offices and on the Council's website.

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

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

Customer Service awareness training is provided to all new staff at their 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 and targets 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 others
- interactive website with a range of on-line services,
- outreach events at rural community locations
- provide visiting officers where appropriate.
- provide an out of hours 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 digitally by default. Alternative formats will be available on request.

## **7. Complaints**

We will:

Have an easy to use complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully, resolve them if possible 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 their 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.

Also as referred to earlier, all staff will have data protection training as part of their induction and have regular updates.

## **9. Review**

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

## Appendix 1

### Customer Service targets

<b>Access Channel</b>	<b>Agreed targets</b>	<b>Monitoring arrangements</b>
Telephone to call centre	85% answered, the contact centre is manned from 8.30 to 5.00pm, calls are put into a queue.	Telephone call log available. Monitored by Customer First. Reported quarterly on Spar and monthly notices posted on the website.
Correspondence received in the post	95% of scannable post is scanned on date of receipt	Scanned items can be monitored on the Electronic Document Management systems. Items not scanned will be monitored by exception.
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.
Complaints	90% Resolved within 10 days or notified of additional time up to maximum of 12 weeks.	Reports from the Customer Services system monitored by Customer First.
Social media	Checked daily and responded to within 24 hours (week days) if response required.	Monitored by Communications.

**Each service may also have individual service specific targets and Performance Indicator's, these are monitored on Spar.net**

## Appendix 2



### 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 into our offices, phone, email, use social media, write to us, or use our online 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 policy)
- 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 42hrs 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.**