

# Customer and Digital Strategy 2019/2022



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## 1. Why a strategy

The Council is here to serve the residents of Rossendale and aims to put our residents (customers) at the heart of everything we do. This means we need to provide consistent, high quality services that meet customers' needs, and offer choice in how those services can be accessed.

Everyone who lives, works or visits Rossendale receives Council services in some way, whether it's having their bins emptied, visiting a park, using a litter bin or applying for a licence or planning application. This strategy is aimed at everyone that receives a Council service either directly or indirectly.

Digital technology and the opportunities it provides are having a huge impact on the way services are delivered and how and when people access services and information. Communities and individual's needs and expectations are changing and new technologies can help services be more responsive and tailored to individual requirements. The Council also has less resource to spend on service delivery and needs to find new ways of delivering the outcomes that are important to local people, businesses and visitors. All these things mean that now is the right time for us to look at the opportunities of doing things differently so that our customers really are at the heart of everything we do.

This Strategy sets out our vision and priorities and the key actions we will take over the next 3 years.

## 2. Our Vision

Our Corporate Strategy sets out our priorities, and what we will do to address them over the next few years. These priorities are:

- A clean and green Rossendale
- A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth
- A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale

The Customer and Digital Strategy will help us to deliver on all our priorities by:

### **Putting customers at the heart of everything we do, designing easily accessible services for all, that respond to our customers current and future needs**

We will do this by:

- Understanding our customers and using this knowledge to tailor services to meet local needs
- Giving our staff the skills and tools to be a truly customer focused organisation, here to support our residents, with services designed around them
- Providing the right channels at the right place and time so that customers can access information and services easily, with great digital services that become our customers first choice.
- We will be clear and honest about what customers can expect and consistent in how we deliver
- Driving change in customer service delivery and keeping abreast of new ways of working and new innovations to make sure we stay up to date in a fast paced environment
- Making sure our data and information is secure and protected, but also transparent and open to others where this helps service improvement.

### **3. How will we deliver the Strategy?**

The Strategy will be delivered through five themes, based on the nationally recognised Customer Service Excellence standards:

- Understanding our Customers
- Customer Focused Organisation
- Information and Access
- Delivery
- Timeliness and Quality of Service

Given the pace of change and advancement of digital technology, we will keep the Strategy under review so that we can refresh it when needed.

#### **• Understanding our Customers**

To be able to design our services around our customers, we need a good understanding of who our customers are, their needs and the reasons why they do or don't access our services. We understand that there is no "one size fits all" approach. Developing customer insight and a deeper understanding of our current customers' needs and preferences is critical to enabling the Council to tailor and develop future service delivery.

#### **Building on our success:**

Rossendale Council has always worked hard to make sure we understand our residents, their needs and priorities. This is reflected in our Corporate Strategy. We seek customer views in a wide range of ways – through surveys and consultation events, through customer feedback, compliments and complaints and directly from Councillors. In recent years we have relaunched our Community Partnerships to give local people a chance to meet and address local issues, provided support and funding to a range of local community and voluntary groups, relaunched our eCitizen Panel so we get encourage people to have their say on local issues. However, we know there is more that we can do in this area.

#### **Through this Strategy we will:**

- Develop borough and neighbourhood profiles
- Develop a better understanding of customer groups, their locations and their use of services using a wide range of customer data
- Encourage people to use the Council's web facilities and evaluate barriers to digital inclusion and develop an approach to improve accessibility
- Develop a single view of our customers, so that we reduce the amount of time you have to spend giving us the same information
- Use compliments and complaints to identify areas of good practice, and where we can make improvements
- Involve customers in the design of services to better meet their needs and preferences, and use feedback to inform improvements

#### **• Being a Customer Focused Organisation**

The Council is committed to putting customers at the heart of everything we do. All employees and elected members in our organisation will be encouraged to actively support this. The Council will continue to develop the #teamrossendale approach to training and development for all.

## Building on our Success

Rossendale Council is a relatively small organisation and we already work well together across services to make sure we are One Team working together for the benefit of the Borough. We bring staff together from different services through training and development to build a one team culture and we are strengthening our internal communications so we can all see how our work contributes to delivering our Corporate Strategy.

### Through this Strategy we will:

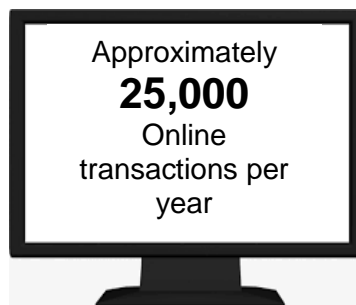
- Equip staff with the skills and knowledge to provide excellent customer service, no matter what their job
- Ensure feedback obtained from our customers is used to inform and tailor service delivery and to ensure that all customer groups are treated fairly.
- Use customer knowledge to inform policy and strategy development and service improvement that helps ensure excellent levels of service.
- Deliver consistent high levels of customer services irrespective of the service our customers choose to deal with. Staff should be polite, friendly and professional and understand customer needs. Staff delivering front line services across the whole organisation will be fully trained customer service professionals to ensure these high standards are maintained.
- Protect customer privacy both in face to face and telephony discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information.

### • Information and Access

The way that customers interact with services is changing. Increasingly, customers expect to do business with the Council via electronic means at times that suit them, 24/7, whether this is by web or email and it is anticipated that face to face and telephony services will reduce as a result. However, we need to recognise that different people will want to access Council services in different ways depending on their needs and the service they require. We want to ensure that, whatever the access method chosen, our customers are provided with accurate, consistent and reliable information across all service areas.



We have an estimated **75,000** telephone calls each year to 01706 217777, **46%** are in relation to Revenues & Benefits, almost **27%** linked to Waste & Recycling Services and around **8%** relate to Planning Services.



Approximately  
**25,000**  
Online  
transactions per  
year

Over **300**  
visitors to our  
One Stop  
Shop each  
week.

**77%** of all  
online  
forms  
relate to  
Waste &  
Recycling  
Services



National research shows the costs of transactions vary drastically from:

**£14.00** – face to face  
**£12.00** – letter  
**£5.00** – phone  
**0.17p** – online



### **Building on success**

Over the last few years, the Council has focused on updating and improving much of its front line provision, increasing access to partner services and upgrading and improving its IT services. We have launched a new website, improved our telephony, and developed our social media presence. This has led to:

- 60% reduction in calls to Corporate switchboard.
- 15,000 annual reduction in revenues and benefits calls.
- 30-40% reduction in face-to-face contact in One Stop Shop.
- Fully automated queuing system on corporate telephony.

The significant challenges on resources to local government will also challenge the Council's ability to meet the varying demands of its diverse customer base, and the emphasis will be on minimising the cost to serve whilst striving to meet that demand. This will see us continue to promote digital as the first channel of choice for our customers.

### **Through this Strategy we will:**

- Continue to provide face to face contact through our One Stop Shop, whilst ensuring that these mirror customer demand and preference.
- Make our website so good, customers will choose use 'self-service' facilities on site, and to look to extend these facilities.
- Increase the take up of digital services, such as web and email, to reduce cost and focus more expensive access channels, such as face to face, to resolving complex service needs.
- Develop options and deliver solutions for mobile working within services to improve staff efficiency; to improve the time taken between officer action and system update; to improve customer response times and avoid duplicate or unnecessary calls.
- Introduce solutions that improve the customer experience such as enabling customers to directly interact with the Council via the web, introducing smartphone apps, providing enhanced telephony and social media facilities.
- Adopt a consistent approach to web delivery that will ensure its efficiency and usage as the primary means of access to Council and partner services.
- Make sure that everyone who wants to can access our services, regardless of channel, balancing digital by default with digital inclusion.
- Economic development - improving the digital economy.

### **• Delivery**

The provision of high-value customer services is about more than delivering effective information and access channels. From the moment that a customer contacts us, to the delivery of the actual service requested, we must ensure that customers are satisfied with their experience.

The Council must ensure that services learn quickly from any mistakes and continue to maintain the trust of customers.

### **Building on success**

The Council is continually improving the way we deliver services and challenges ourselves to be the best we can be, within the resources we have available. We have overhauled our performance management framework and the way we measure and manage our performance to make sure that every pound we spend has the best impact on achieving our priorities.

### **Through this Strategy we will:**

- Work with Councillors as a valuable source of feedback from customers and residents, and ensure they have the opportunity to develop the same customer service skills as front line Council employees in working with their constituents.
- Consult with customers and ensure that we meet the standards expected by them, together with any national standards and internal targets.
- Design our services from contact to completion so they are as efficient and effective

as possible

- Identify and implement new ways of working and digital innovation to improve service delivery
- Monitor and challenge how standards and key departmental performance targets are met and ensure that the Council informs its customers about its performance.
- Benchmark against other similar organisations and learn from best practice to continually incorporate change and improve our services.
- Regularly reviewing our complaints, comments and compliments process with a clear commitment to deal with problems fully and solve them wherever possible.

- **Timeliness and Quality of Service**

The development of a customer focused culture requires our customer service standards to be visible and embedded. The Council will aim to be the best we can with the resources available. It is also important in this digital age that we keep the information we hold safe, secure and protected, whilst being transparent and accountable.

As new and different access channels are developed it is important that we keep our standards up to date.

### **Building on Success**

The Council already has customer service standards and strives to deliver timely services. We have ensured our information is safe and secure through the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations and we have robust security in place to protect our data and systems.

### **Through this Strategy we will:**

- Update our customer service standards, to take account of new access channels (specifically social media).
- Monitor our performance against our own and other organisations standards for timeliness and quality and take action to improve when required.
- Ensure the data and information we hold is safe and secure
- Share what information we can with the public and partners to help the development of future services.

## **4. How will we know if we've been successful?**

- Improvements for customers – key success measures
- Improvements for the Council – key success measures