



Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Delivering excellent customer services

***Customer Access Strategy
2011 – 2015***



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Section 1: Our Vision

Rotherham Council has a desire to provide excellent services to the public and to provide value for money to tax payers. The ways that we enable the public to contact the Council play a big part in supporting this requirement.

Our vision for customer access is simple.

Council Services will be easy to use. Our services will be cost effective, good quality and meet our customers' needs.

This Strategy sets out how the Council will turn our vision into a reality for our customers. It explains how we will meet customer needs and demands using our resources most effectively.

We believe it is important to continually develop and improve the ways that customers are able to get in touch with us and to ensure that our customer services are effectively and efficiently managed. This will mean that despite the challenging financial climate the Council is facing, we will continue to be able to deliver against our commitment to always put the customer first.



Section 2: *Our current position*

The Council is working to make Rotherham a prosperous place, where people have choices and opportunities to improve their lives.

Like all other Councils, Rotherham faces a significant reduction in the amount of money we have to spend and we must review and develop the ways that we provide access to our services so that we are able to continue to deliver cost effective, good quality services to our customers, particularly the most vulnerable. The Council's Corporate Plan sets out how we will do this and focuses on the most important things that we want to achieve, which are

- Making sure no community is left behind;
- Providing quality education; ensuring people have opportunities to improve skills, learn and get a job;
- Ensuring care and protection are available for those people who need it most;
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities; and
- Improving the environment.

Rotherham is a Metropolitan Borough, which has a population of approximately 254,000. The Council provides services to a diverse population that is made up of men and women, children and young people who make many different and valuable contributions to the life of the Borough. Our aim is to ensure that all people in Rotherham are able to reach their full potential.

Over the last few years, the Council has modernised its customer access channels, making customer service delivery more efficient and ensuring that it puts the customer at the centre of all activities.

The Council has developed five local Joint Service Centres, which enable customers to obtain information, make payments, report problems and apply for a range of different services. The Joint Service Centres are sited across the Borough, meaning that people are able to access services in person at a location which is within approximately 5 miles of their home. Over 550,000 customer visits were made to these local centres in 2010.

Customers can also obtain information about some services at local libraries and Children's Centres, the Information Centre and other Neighbourhood facilities across Rotherham. A map showing the location of customer access points across the borough can be found in Appendix 1.

To accompany our Joint Service Centres, the Council has developed its telephone contact centre, which handles over 1 million of the Council's customer telephone calls. The telephone contact centre offers extended customer opening hours, providing greater flexibility for our customers.

The Council has a well used website (www.rotherham.gov.uk) as an additional contact channel. The website provides information about our services and also offers the facility for customers to complete service requests online. Over 750,000 visitors obtained information by using the website in 2010.

The Council has also begun to use social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to help us provide immediate information to our customers and has begun to offer the facility for customers to get or give information about some services via their mobile phone. Research shows that 80% of the UK population owns a mobile phone and the number of people who want to use this method as a way to access services is steadily increasing. We will continue to increase the number of services which can be accessed in this way.

To help us provide easy access to services for the many diverse communities of Rotherham, the Council has commissioned 'thebigword' to provide translation services on its behalf. This enables the Council to communicate effectively with all of our community groups. We are able to offer translators and interpreters via telephone or in person, and are able to provide translated documents or documents in braille, audio, large print and easy read formats where required.

The Council has been able to modernise the way customer services are delivered by focusing on customer experiences and ensuring that customer needs drive the changes that we make to services.

Over the period of this Strategy, the Council will continue to work with communities to ensure that access to services continue to improve and develop. In doing this, we will challenge ourselves; ensure that we fully understand the needs of our communities and that we are clear about what local people want from public services. This will ensure that we deliver what matters for the people of Rotherham.

Section 3: Our achievements

There have been significant achievements in Customer Service delivery since our last strategy was published in 2008. During 2008 - 2011 the Council has focused on the delivery of five strategic objectives which underpin the Customer Access Strategy. These were:

- to improve the customer experience,
- to refocus our priorities, by reviewing our processes and technology requirements,
- to provide joined up service delivery, by proactively working with partners
- to market and promote ways to access our services and publish our achievements; and
- to strengthen the learning, development and training of our staff

Over this time, we have

- **Increased Customer Satisfaction levels**, achieving a 13% increase in the number of people who were satisfied with the customer service levels they received over the last three years. In 2008, 80% of our customers told us they were satisfied with service levels. In 2010, 93% of customers were satisfied with the service they received. More information is available in Section 4 of the Strategy document.
- **Developed our telephone contact centre**, which has doubled the amount of calls it handles since 2008, to over 1,000,000 calls a year. We have also improved the performance of this contact centre. In 2010, 97% of our customers were able to immediately speak to a customer service adviser.
- **Refreshed the council website**. Approximately 65,000 service requests and transactions were completed via the Council website in 2010, which was a 20% increase on those completed in 2009. This is a very convenient way for customers to access services and is a cost effective contact method for the Council. The website can be accessed at www.rotherham.gov.uk
- **Implemented new ways to let customers know what is happening**. We have a registration facility on our website, www.rotherham.gov.uk/signup, which allows customers to receive information about services and events. We also use text messaging and email messaging to let people know about important service information and we now use social media, such as twitter and facebook to provide information and news.

- **Improved our website accessibility** for those customers who have a disability, a sensory impairment or additional language needs. We also continue to provide access to translation and interpreting services where required.
- **Continued to provide free internet access** at all our local libraries, supported by trained staff. We also deliver ICT taster sessions, to help customers become more familiar with technology.
- **Continued to provide local Joint Service Centres** in the Town Centre, in Maltby, in Dinnington, in Aston and in Swinton. Our final Joint Service Centre will be based in Rawmarsh and will be completed by summer 2012. This means that customers can access a range of services in person from various locations across the borough (see Appendix 1 for locations and addresses).
- **Developed opportunities to access services at libraries and, Children's Centres** across the borough. We have also **developed 'Carer's Corner'**, a venue dedicated specifically to supporting carers within Rotherham.
- **Expanded the ways you can pay for goods and services from the Council by joining the PayPoint network.** This means that customers now have the opportunity to pay their council tax or their rent at any PayPoint venue or at any Post Office across Rotherham and the rest of the UK. In Rotherham, this has increased the number of cash payment facilities to over 140 places.
- **Encouraged over 70% of our customers to use a direct debit to pay for their Council Tax.** 1800 customers have switched to using Direct Debit as their preferred payment method in the last two years. This is a cost effective way for the Council to be able to collect Council Tax payments, and means that customers do not have to make the journey to one of our Joint Service Centres to pay their bill.
- **Implemented clear customer service standards**, so members of the public know what to expect from us, and we have successfully delivered against these standards.
- **Provided training and support** to our staff members, enabling them to deal with customer queries in a professional and timely manner.
- **Actively engaged with customers** when we have made changes to our services. We have set up 'learning from customer groups', regularly completed customer consultation and have provided a facility on our website so that you can tell us what we are doing well and what we need to improve.

- **Provided a ‘Tell Us Once’ service for people who are registering births or deaths.** We are able to tell all other local and central government agencies of such changes, removing the need for customers to have to tell numerous departments the same information.
- **Provided Welfare Rights advice** to terminally ill cancer patients on behalf of the Macmillan Service, via the Council’s Advice Services.
- **Worked closely with NHS Rotherham to deliver the Registration service from Rotherham hospital** as well as from the Town Centre Registry Office.
- **Developed Joint Service Centres in Aston and in Maltby**, working in partnership with other public and private sector providers. This enables customers to access a wider range of services under one roof.
- **Implemented flexible ways of working** for our staff members. This means that most of our staff members can now access customer records and do their job from any location. This reduces the need for additional travel, improves the efficiency of our staff and means we can reduce the number of buildings the Council needs to maintain whilst delivering services to customers more flexibly.
- **Achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard** across all our Council Services, which means that the Council has been independently recognised for meeting the national standards which demonstrate excellent customer service delivery. The Council has also been recognised for exceeding the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard in the work we do to provide joined up service delivery with our partners.
- We have also been rated as **Excellent under the Equality Framework for Local Government**, which means the Council has been independently recognised as performing excellently to meet the needs of the diverse communities within Rotherham.



Section 4: Customer Feedback

What our customers are telling us.

We have completed a number of consultation exercises to help us understand what customers like and dislike about our services and how they think the Council should provide access to services.

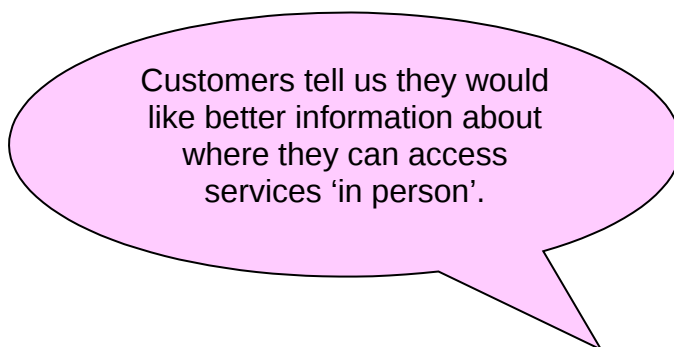
Our surveys tell us that generally Rotherham people are satisfied with the way in which they can obtain services and that their customer service experience is improving. In 2008, 80% of customers were satisfied with their service experience. By 2011, **93% of customers told us that they were satisfied with the service provided** via our Joint Service Centres and our contact centre.

Satisfaction with our Joint Service Centres at Maltby and Aston is very high, with 99% of customers questioned in 2010 telling us that they were very satisfied with their service experience. Customers have told us they enjoy being able to access a range of public services under one roof and they like the modern facilities which have been developed. Based on the success of these Centres, the Council will look to provide services delivered by other public or voluntary sector partners at other Joint Service Centres across the borough.

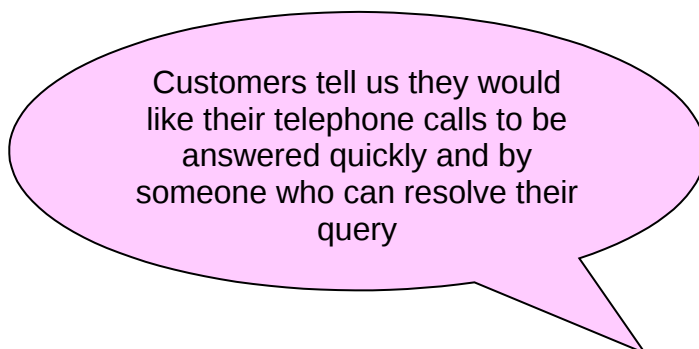
Satisfaction with the Council website is also increasing. In 2008, 60% of customers were satisfied with the level of service they received via our website. In 2011, 75% of customers told us that they were satisfied with their overall service experience when using our site. Customers have told us they like to use our 'Google' search facility to find information and want to be able to submit service requests using electronic methods. We will continue to work with customers to help develop our website, strengthen customer satisfaction levels and ensure that the content we provide is simple, easy to obtain and meets customer needs.

We will continue to monitor our customer views on a regular basis and will take action to make appropriate changes to services where we are able to do so.

Where customers think we can improve.

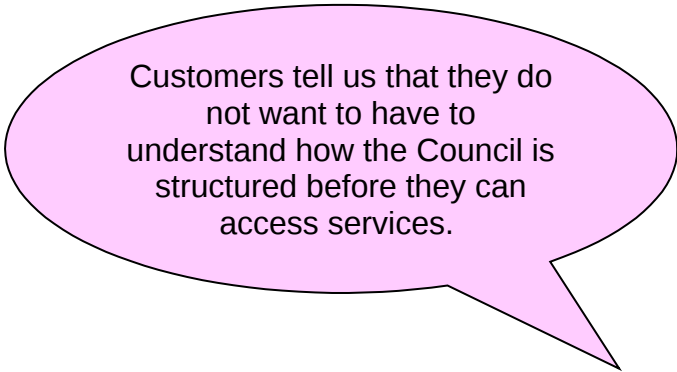


Customers have told us they do not want to have to visit several different offices to resolve their queries. This Strategy will focus on bringing more services into our customer service centres, making it easier for customers to access a full range of services from one place.



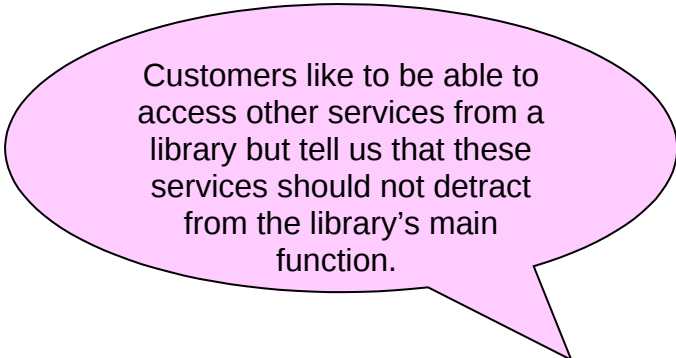
Customers have told us they do not want to have their telephone calls passed to a number of different members of staff. This Strategy will focus on

reducing the amount of telephone numbers customers will need to use and making it easier to speak to someone who has the right knowledge to answer customer queries.



Customers tell us that they do not want to have to understand how the Council is structured before they can access services.

Customers have told us they expect Council services to work together seamlessly. This Strategy will ensure that the full range of services can be accessed via our Joint Service Centres, telephone contact centre and website. We will use simple language and will ensure that information is easy to find. This will mean that customers do not need to understand how the Council is structured when they contact us.



Customers like to be able to access other services from a library but tell us that these services should not detract from the library's main function.

We will ensure that this feedback is used when we design new buildings and when we review and develop our customer contact points.

Specific actions are included in this Strategy which will address the feedback we have received about how the Council can improve its access channels. A full list of actions is set out in Section 7 of the Strategy.

Section 5: An overview of our Customer Access Strategy

Our customers have told us that they want to have choices in the ways they can access services and interact with the Council. Customers want to use different ways to contact the Council for differing service requests and to suit their own convenience.

To help customers do this, Rotherham Council will continue to offer four ways to enable customers to access services. These are

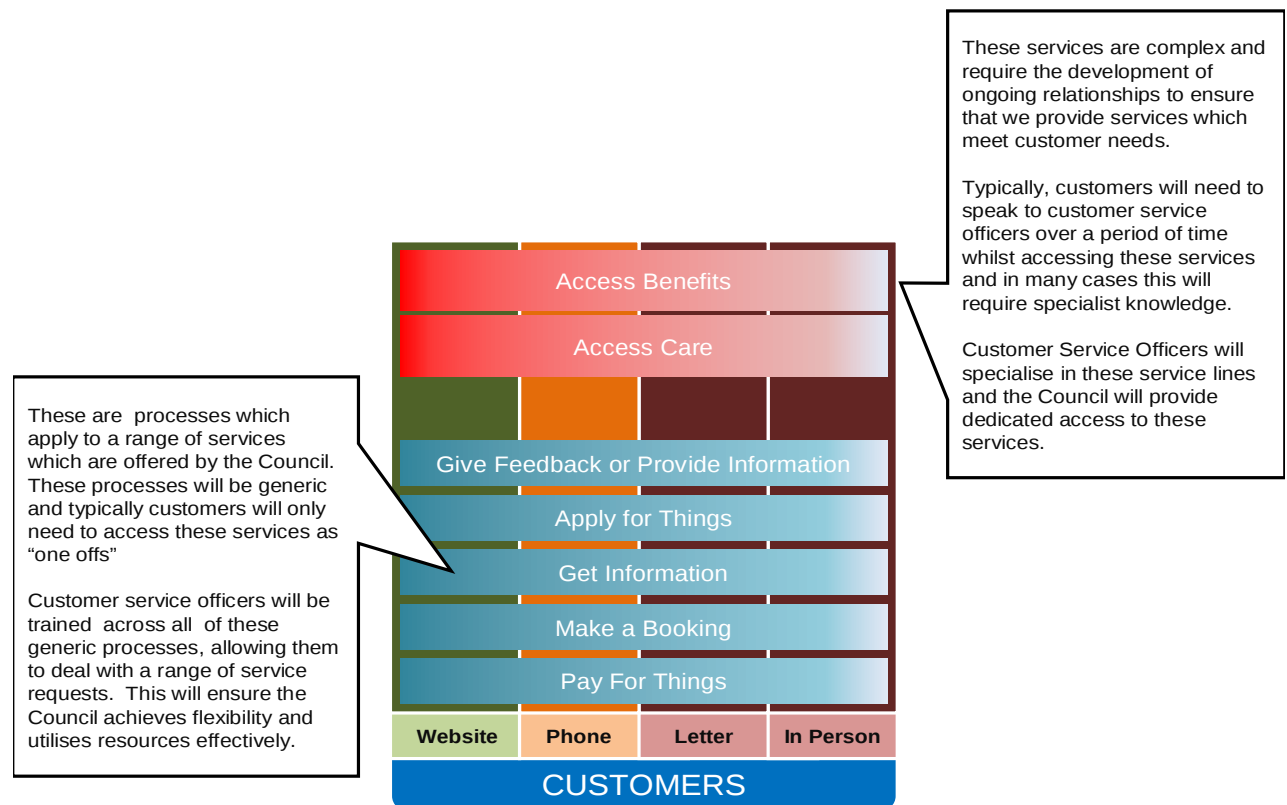
- The Website (including social media such as Facebook and Twitter)
- Telephone
- Letter or email
- In person

We want to ensure that customers don't have to understand the complexities of our Council structures when contacting us. By opening our local Joint Service Centres and our telephone contact centre, we have helped to make this clearer, but we always want to do more. We will therefore put more services into our Joint Service Centre network so our customers can access the same range of Council services whichever Joint Service Centre they visit. We will also put more services into our telephone contact centre, making it easier for customers to get their query resolved at the first point of contact.

We will have clear links between the four different ways that customers can access services. This will ensure that the same level of service is obtained, no matter which method is chosen by customers.

To help us achieve this in a cost effective way, we will simplify the ways customers can access services. We will provide specialist access to Social Care and Benefits services. For most other services, customers will be able to speak to a single customer service advisor who will be able to deal with a

range of service requests. Our proposed model for service delivery is shown below:



The Council's Customer Charter will provide clear and simple information about the standards customers can expect from us. The charter will be displayed in our customer contact points and can also be found on our website. A copy of the Customer Charter can be found in Appendix 2.

The Council will seek feedback from customers to help us understand how we are performing and to help shape ongoing service delivery and we will provide a number of ways for members of the public to tell us their views about our services and our performance.

We will tell customers how we are performing against our standards on our website, www.rotherham.gov.uk/performance.

Section 6: Developing our Customer Contact Channels

Our four customer contact channels will be reviewed and developed over the lifetime of the Strategy and we will learn from and share best practice with a number of leading public bodies and private sector companies.

To support continuing development, we have implemented a number of commitments for each of our access channels.

Using the website to contact the Council

- We will expand our website by providing sixteen additional services for our customers and will enhance a further ten existing services. We will also provide access to services via the single central government website which is expected to be implemented over the lifetime of this strategy.
- We will encourage customers to use our website when applying for some services. We already encourage customers to use the website when applying for jobs and when applying for social housing and we will look to extend this approach for seven additional services.
- Where customers need support in using online services, we will offer this or be able to signpost customers to those people or organisations who are able to assist.



Using the telephone to contact the Council

- We will look to reduce the amount of telephone numbers customers have to use when they want to contact the Council to 3 'golden numbers'. The Council currently has 13 'golden numbers' and also publishes a vast number of service specific telephone numbers.
- We will move eight additional services into our telephone contact centre. This will ensure that the Council is able to handle customer telephone calls quickly and effectively and is able to easily tell customers how we are performing against our performance standards.
- Where we are able to work with partner organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Voluntary Action Rotherham, Rotherham NHS and other local authority partners to streamline the ways that customers can obtain services via the telephone and provide greater value for money, we will look to do so.
- Our telephone contact centre will respond to telephone calls within 21 seconds and our telephone abandonment rates will be less than 2%.



Contacting the Council in person

- We will provide access to an increased range of Council services at all of our Joint Service Centres.
- We will work to share our facilities with other organisations, ensuring that people can access a wide range of local services under one roof.
- Where there is a clear customer need, we will provide ways for customers to access services from some of our other Council buildings. For example, a library, Carer's Corner or a Children's Centre may have free phone access, internet kiosks or video conferencing facilities, providing ways to contact customer service staff in one of our Joint Service Centres without the need to travel.
- We will regularly review usage of our Joint Service Centres and our smaller customer contact points, ensuring that we offer services in the right places at the right time in Rotherham.



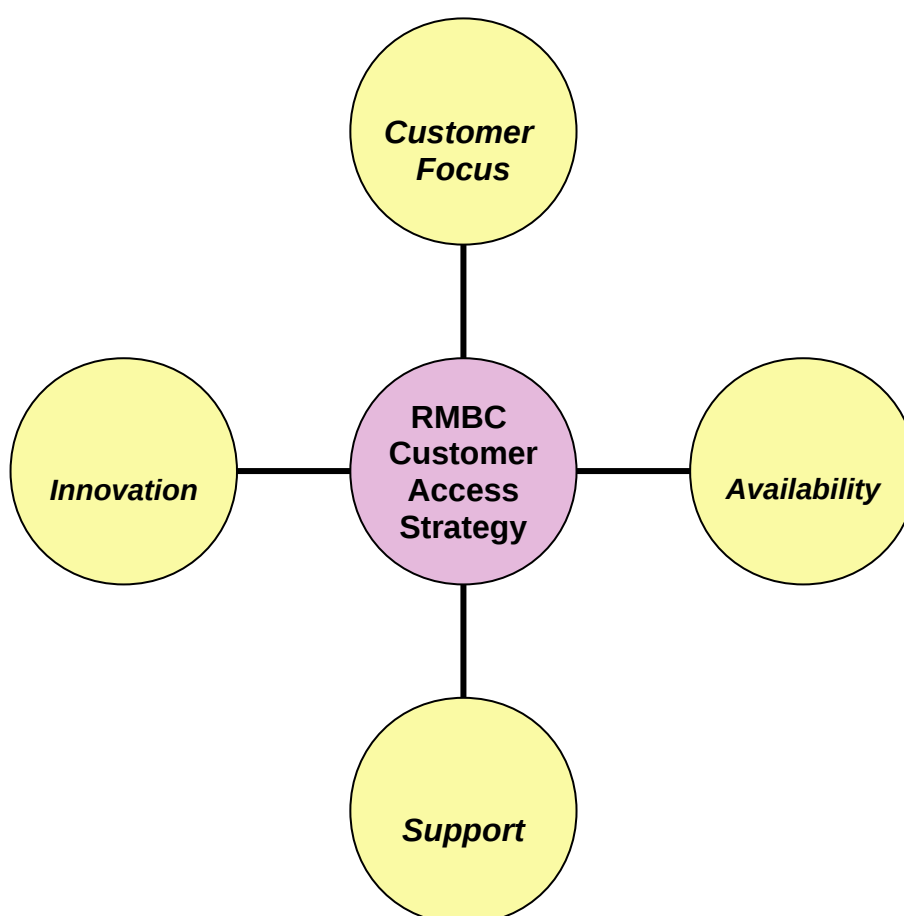
Using letter or email to contact the Council

- We will roll out an electronic document records management system, which will ensure that all our staff can access letters and information no matter where they have been received. This will help to make the Council more efficient and means that we can answer customer queries from any of our contact points.
- We will communicate with customers using their preferred method of contact, where they tell us what this is. We will use email to communicate with customers who tell us their email address.
- We will encourage the use of standardised emails, which will help us to automate processes and remove duplication.

- We will use plain English and avoid the use of jargon.

Section 7: Delivering the Strategy

The Customer Services Strategy 2011 - 2015 is built around four main areas, or themes. These are:



The Council has developed a detailed action plan underpinning each theme, which explains in more detail what we want to achieve and what we will do to deliver the Strategy.

Section 7a:**Customer Focus**

This theme focuses on listening to our customers, developing services which meet customer needs and getting service delivery right first time.

Working closely with our customers has helped the Council to modernise and effectively develop access to services. This theme builds on the working practices that have already been embedded across the Council and will ensure that we place the customer at the heart of all that we do.

The Council has a range of customer groups in place that we work in partnership with to shape services and this helps to ensure that we are able to continually improve our processes using customer feedback. The full list of our customer groups is listed in Appendix 3.

Over the last two years, the Council has measured the number of times we have been unable to resolve customer queries at the first point of contact. This measure is known as 'avoidable contact'. Using this information, the Council has continued its focus on identifying processes which need improvement. This has resulted in being able to reduce levels of avoidable customer contact from 17% in 2008/2009 to 11% by the end of 2010/2011. This means that we are able to deliver services more cost effectively.

We will continue to focus on reducing avoidable customer contact over the period of this Strategy document, aiming to reduce levels by a further 6% over the period of this Strategy. This will help us to deliver cost effective local services that compare favourably with other high performing Local Authorities. We will do this by taking quick and decisive action to improve our processes and to put things right when they have gone wrong.

<i>What we want to achieve is:</i>	<p>We know who our customers are, how they get in touch and what their needs are.</p> <p>We provide a service that gives customers a range of options to meet their individual needs.</p> <p>We consult with customers, listen to their feedback and make changes to services where required.</p> <p>Our services continue to improve through the effective use of technology and redesign.</p> <p>We deliver services that are right first time</p> <p>We reduce avoidable contact levels to 5% or less</p>
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	<p>by the end of this strategy period.</p> <p>At least 95% of customers are satisfied with the customer service levels provided by the Council by the end of this Strategy period.</p>
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<i>The way we will do this is:</i>	1.1	Appoint Service Improvement Officers who will be responsible for reviewing processes and implementing improvements to service delivery; ensuring services are delivered effectively to our customers
	1.2	Continue to use customer feedback to help review and shape services.
	1.3	Work with our partners to develop a regional customer insight programme.
	1.4	Benchmark our performance against the Customer Service Excellence standards.
	1.5	Where there is a clear business case, integrate online and contact centre transactions directly into back office administration systems. This will remove duplication and increase efficiency.
	1.6	Continue to invest in customer care training and development for our staff members.
	1.7	By April 2012, where customers have requested a service online, the Council will provide regular update messages to customers electronically, so that customers can track the progress of their request.
	1.8	Encourage and support staff members to identify inefficiencies and make rapid changes to processes which will improve customer service delivery.
	1.9	Improve the information we provide to customers about council housing applications, including offering online bidding, improved access to information about council house availability and access to individual information relating to waiting list status, by October 2011.
	1.10	Provide easy access to online financial information such as how the Council's budget is made up, how much we spend on service delivery and details of

		Council spend which is over £500. This will increase openness and transparency.
	1.11	Explore the use of a system (known as bluetooth technology) which will allow the Council to send public messages and marketing information such as events and important information directly to mobile phones and free of charge, by September 2012
	1.12	Integrate email, text and postal distribution lists and enable customers to select their preference by September 2014.
	1.13	Ensure that all post received is electronically scanned by April 2012. This will help to improve the time taken to process customer service requests.

Section 7b:**Availability**

This theme focuses on developing ways that a customer can easily obtain services.

We know that our customers like to have a range of ways to be able to obtain services. This theme aims to ensure that the Council continues to develop and improve the contact methods that customers can use.

***What we want to achieve:***

Customers can get their queries answered from one place, rather than having to go to different offices or having to use multiple telephone numbers.

It is quick and simple for customers to access any service.

Customers have a choice in the way they are able to access services.

The range of services available via our telephone contact centre and via our website is increased.

Information about how customers can get in touch is easy to find and is clearly displayed.

Staff members have access to the information they need to respond effectively and promptly to a customer.

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<i>The way we will do this is:</i>	2.1	Move seven additional services (Phase 1) into our customer service network by April 2012 and complete further phases by April 2013. This will ensure customers can get a consistent and increased range of services across all Joint Service Centres and via the telephone contact centre.
	2.2	Implement the agreed recommendations from the Council's locality review, by Summer 2012. This aims to ensure that we are delivering the right services in the most suitable locations and are making best use of our buildings and assets.
	2.3	Structure Customer Services in line with the proposed model for customer service delivery, making it easier for customers to speak to the same Customer Services Advisor and obtain information about an increased range of services by December 2012. The model is detailed in Section 5 of the Strategy.
	2.4	Open a Joint Service Centre in the new civic building (Riverside House), which will provide access to a broad range of customer and cultural services by April 2012.
	2.5	Implement easy ways for customers to be able to access Council services from Wath library, Kimberworth Park library and Greasbrough library by Autumn 2012.
	2.6	Reduce the amount of telephone numbers which customers use to contact the Council from 13 golden numbers to 3 golden numbers, by April 2014, making it easier for customers to know where to call.
	2.7	Implement online access to licensing information by December 2011, which will make it easier for businesses to obtain licensing information and make electronic applications.
	2.8	Implement online renewals of applications such as blue badges by April 2013, which will provide

		increased availability and remove the need for customers to make a visit to the Council 'in person'.
	2.9	Implement an online booking facility by April 2013, which means that customers will be able to view availability and book Council facilities or make appointments via the website or via our telephone contact centre.
	2.10	Provide secure online access to Council Tax records by April 2013, which will mean customers are able to view their personal data and make alterations electronically.
	2.11	Implement automated telephone agents for high volume Street Pride service requests by June 2012, which will mean that customers will be able to report problems quickly and efficiently.
	2.12	Provide access to a range of language and easy read options where practical. If not, clearly indicate how a customer can obtain translation services or information in a suitable format.
	2.13	Make the content of the Council website available to partner organisations and also take content from partners. This will mean that customers can get a full range of public service information from one place.
	2.14	Use digital screens in our Joint Service Centres to provide information about the Council and the locality by April 2012. This will help to increase public awareness of what is happening in their local area.
	2.15	Develop further applications for mobile telephones, including fault reporting, payments and simple information provision by October 2012. This will mean customers can easily use their mobile phone to contact the council electronically.
	2.16	Develop online forums that will provide greater opportunities for customers to interact with the Council by April 2012.
	2.17	Broadcast events on the website, such as Election information, ceremonies and Council events using

		webcam and pod cast technology.
	2.18	Pilot live web chat sessions by June 2012, which will enable customers to interact with Council Officers and Elected Members electronically about a range of issues and get an immediate response to their questions.
	2.19	Implement an electronic document management system, which will ensure that staff members can access customer correspondence electronically from any location by April 2012 and will improve efficiency and cost effectiveness by reducing the size of accommodation which is required across the Council.

Section 7c:**Support**

This theme focuses on encouraging and supporting customers to use cost effective ways to obtain services

The number of people in Rotherham who use the Internet has increased by 20% over the last three years. 65% of the Rotherham population now regularly uses the internet and there is good broadband coverage within the area. However there are still a high proportion of people in Rotherham who have never used the internet and who face higher prices for goods and services such as insurance, which are increasingly traded online.

This theme aims to encourage and support customers to use cost effective and flexible contact channels which will result in financial savings for both customers and for the Council.

<i>What we want to achieve:</i>	<p>Where customers want to obtain services electronically, they are able to do so.</p> <p>New services are designed using electronic methods as a key option for customers to use.</p> <p>Where customers (including those who do not have personal access to a computer) need support in using online or electronic services, we are able to offer this easily, via support from customer service advisors or by signposting to other suitable organisations.</p> <p>Customers can find out about all the Council's key communications via the website.</p> <p>Customers are encouraged to use electronic methods when applying for some services.</p> <p>The number of customers using electronic methods to request services and complete service transactions increases by 30% each year from 2012. Currently, approximately 65,000 transactions are completed electronically. By 2015, over 142,000 transactions will be completed in this way.</p> <p>The number of customers using the telephone to request services and complete transactions increases by 10% each year from 2012. Currently,</p>
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	<p>approximately 1 million customers contact the Council by telephone. By 2015, we expect to receive over 1,465,000 customer contacts by this channel.</p> <p>At least 85% of customers tell us it is easy to use electronic or automated methods to obtain Council services by the end of this Strategy period.</p>
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<i>The way we will do this is:</i>	3.1	Provide existing customer service advisors in our telephone contact centre and Joint Service Centres with skills to help customers use the Council website by April 2012.
	3.2	Using some of our existing customer service advisors, implement digital champions in our Joint Service Centres, who will provide in depth help and support to customers or who will be able to signpost customers to other organisations who are able to assist customers by April 2012.
	3.3	Support initiatives which will help increase the number of people in the Borough who are able to use the internet.
	3.4	Continue to provide free access to the internet in all libraries, supported by trained staff. In addition, provide public access computers and self service booths in children's centres and Joint Service Centres across the borough by April 2012. This will help customers access the internet and Council services if they do not have personal access to a computer.
	3.5	Promote the website and electronic channels as one of the main access points for Council services.
	3.6	Develop the ways that we use mobile phone text messaging to communicate with all customers, including hearing impaired customers and hard to reach groups by September 2013.
	3.7	Develop website processes for all high volume transactions by April 2013. These processes will be used by members of the public and by customer service advisors supporting our telephone and in person access channels.

Section 7d:**Innovation**

This theme focuses on working with partner organisations to deliver services in new and innovative ways

The Council is working actively with partners to deliver services in different ways. This ranges from contracting other public sector or voluntary sector bodies to deliver services, to contracting a private sector company or a social enterprise group to deliver the service on behalf of the Council. This theme focuses on the work we will do to deliver customer services on behalf of others and on the work we will do to commission customer service delivery from other organisations.

What we want to achieve is	<p>The Council works proactively with other organisations and voluntary groups to provide customers with easy access to the full range of services they need.</p> <p>We will always commission services to be delivered on behalf of the Council, where others can provide a better and more cost effective service.</p> <p>We will identify opportunities where we are able to deliver cost effective customer services on behalf of others.</p> <p>We will share systems, accommodation and resources with other organisations where it is cost effective to do so, and where the customer's service experience will be enhanced.</p>
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The way we will do this is:	4.1	Develop a 'Tell us Once' facility for customer change of circumstances by April 2014. This will mean that customers only need to tell one organisation about their changes in circumstance and other agencies will be updated automatically.
	4.2	Investigate the opportunities to develop joint services with voluntary and other partner organisations in our Swinton, Dinnington and Town Centre Customer Service Centres by Autumn 2012.

	4.3	Seek opportunities to utilise 'internet kiosk' facilities via partner organisations, including the NHS, Job Centre+, Citizens Advice Bureau and South Yorkshire Police by June 2012.
	4.4	Work with the Department for Work and Pensions to successfully transfer the 1 st phase of the Housing Benefits and Fraud Investigation Services to central government, beginning in April 2013.
	4.5	Work closely with service users and community groups when commissioning services which are not delivered by the Council, to ensure that services are accessible and meet customer needs.
	4.6	Review opportunities for shared customer service delivery throughout the lifetime of this strategy and implement shared services where contractually agreed.
	4.7	Work with partner organisations to open a new Joint Service Centre in Rawmarsh, which will provide local access to Council services, health services, other public services and access to voluntary organisations.
	4.8	Work with Community Advice Groups across Rotherham to review and strengthen the delivery of Community Legal Advice Services in Rotherham by April 2012.
	4.9	Work with Community Advice Groups across Rotherham to review and strengthen the delivery of Employment, Housing, Immigration and Health Advice Services by January 2013.

Section 8: Expected Outcomes

The vision for our Strategy is that

Council Services will be easy to use. Our services will be cost effective, good quality and meet our customers' needs'.

Successful delivery of this Strategy will result in customers

- Having increased choice in the ways they contact the Council;
- Having simplified access to services;
- Seeing a reduction in the amount of times they have to contact the Council unnecessarily;
- Being able to participate in service design;
- Receiving good quality services
- Receiving 'value for money,' cost effective customer services; and
- Being supported to use new contact methods.

Section 9: Measuring Success

How will we know if we have been successful?

We will monitor our progress regularly and will provide feedback on our performance and on-going progress annually to Elected Members.

We believe we will be successful in delivery of this Strategy when,

- We see improving customer satisfaction levels, with results reaching above 95% by the end of this Strategy period.
- We see reducing numbers of customer complaints.
- We see a 10% increase in the number of people using the telephone channel and a 30% increase in the number of people using electronic channels to contact the Council each year.
- We see a reduction in the 'cost to serve' of each transaction.
- We continue to comply with the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- We have reduced levels of avoidable contact to 5% or less by the end of this Strategy period.
- Our telephone abandonment rates are less than 2%, and
- We achieve our customer charter commitments and our service performance standards.

Section 10: Finance

A variety of funding sources will support the delivery of the Customer Access Strategy. These include the Council's capital programme, service delivery budgets, central government grants and external funding sources.

The Customer Access Strategy will support improved efficiency within the Council and will also support business change across the Council. We will regularly evaluate the cost of services and look for opportunities to reduce service costs, whilst also continuing to meet customer needs.

Throughout the period of the Strategy, ICT will be used to enable improved service delivery. Investments in ICT and business change will be determined by clear business cases which demonstrate improved service delivery and reduced costs.

Section 11: Governance of the strategy

Who is responsible for delivery of the Customer Access Strategy?

Delivery of the Customer Access Strategy will be overseen by the Strategic Director of Finance, supported by the Customer Access Client Officer.

The Council's Customer Access Client Officer will be supported in the implementation of the Strategy by the Customer Access Group and the Customer Service Consolidation Board, who will act as champions and drivers of change to others members of staff within the Council.

Technological investments will be approved by members of the Council's ICT and Information Governance Board and by Elected Members where appropriate.

The Strategy is a living document and as such, a formal review will be completed annually, following initial publication. Progress will be reported to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team and to members of the Council's Cabinet.

Appendix 1 – Location of customer access points

Joint Service Centres: By the end of this Strategy period customers will be able to access a wide range of Council Services from all Joint Service Centres. Customers will also be able to access a number of voluntary services such as Citizens Advice Bureau from these centres.

In Maltby, Aston and Rawmarsh Joint Service Centres, customers are able to access GP services, Community Health Services and some services delivered by South Yorkshire Police. We provide social care family contact facilities at our Centres in Maltby and Aston and rooms are also available which community organisations may hire for events and activities.

Joint Service Centre* (Town Centre) (Will relocate to Riverside House in February 2012)	Civic Building, Walker Place, Rotherham S65 1UF
Joint Service Centre (Swinton)	Station Street, Swinton S64 8PZ
Joint Service Centre (Dinnington)	New Street, Dinnington S25 2EX
Joint Service Centre + library (Aston)	Worksop Road, Swallownest S26 4WD
Joint Service Centre (Maltby)	Braithwell Road, Maltby S66 8JE
Joint Service Centre (Town Centre) (Opens February 2012)	Riverside House, Main Street, Rotherham
Joint Service Centre + library (Opens April 2012)	Barbers Avenue, Rawmarsh

Libraries: Customers can access library facilities, public access computers, information about local services, local travel information and general information about Council services. Customers will also be able to obtain advice and apply for some Council Services at Wath, Kimberworth Park, and Greasbrough libraries by the end of this Strategy period.

Library* (Will relocate to Riverside House in March 2012)	Central Library, Walker Place, Rotherham S65 1JH
Library	Mowbray Gardens, Herringthorpe Valley Road S65 2UH
Library	Sough Hall Avenue, Thorpe Hesley S61 2QJ
Library	Montgomery Square, Wath S63 7RZ
Library	Station Street, Swinton S64 8PZ
Library	Coach Road, Greasbrough S61 4PU
Library	Wheatley Road, Kimberworth Park S61 3JU
Library* (Will relocate to Rawmarsh Joint Service Centre from April 2012)	Rawmarsh Hill, Rawmarsh S62 6DS
Library	286 Bawtry Road, Wickersley S66

	1JJ
Library	High Street, Maltby S66 8LD
Library	Dinnington Resource Centre, Laughton Road, Dinnington S25 2PP
Library	Ellis Street, Brinsworth S60 7DJ
Library	Wales Road, Kiverton S26 6RB
Library	School Road, Thurgroft S66 9DE

Children's Centres: Children's Centres provide a variety of advice and support for parents and carers. Services are developed in line with local community needs. You can access child and family health services, childcare and early learning facilities, advice on parenting and advice on local childcare options. General information about Council services can be accessed via internet kiosk.

Children's Centre (Cortonwood)	Brampton Cortonwood Infants, Chapel Avenue, Brampton Bierlow S73 0XH
Children's Centre (Wath Victoria)	Wath Victoria J + I School, Sandymount Road, Wath S63 7AB
Children's Centre (Ferham Centre)	Rotherham Central, Ferham Road, S65 1AP
Children's Centre (Kimberworth)	Kimberworth Road, Kimberworth S61 1HE
Children's Centre (Thorpe Hesley)	Thorpe Hesley Infants
Children's Centre (Rockingham)	Rockingham J+I School, Roughwood Road, S61 4HY
Children's Centre (Redscope)	Park View Primary School, Kimberworth Park S61 3JT
Children's Centre (The Arnold Centre)	The Arnold Centre, Goldsmith Road, S65 2LY
Children's Centre (Coleridge)	Coleridge Primary School, Coleridge Road, S65 1LW
Children's Centre (Dinnington)	Dinnington Primary School, School Street, Dinnington S25 2RE
Children's Centre (Ryton Brook)	Ryton Brook, Ryton Road, Anston
Children's Centre (Thurgroft)	Locksley Drive, Thurgroft
Children's Centre (Sue Walker)	Meadows Juniors, Kiverton Park S26 5QT
Children's Centre (Silver Birch)	Greenfield Court, Flanderwell S66 2JF
Children's Centre (Marcliffe)	Beech Avenue, Dalton Listerdale S65 3HN
Children's Centre (Aughton)	Aughton Early Years Centre, Main Street, Aughton S26 3XH
Children's Centre (The Meadows)	Catcliffe Primary School, Catcliffe S60 5SW
Children's Centre (Valley)	Broom Valley Road, S60 2QU
Children's Centre (Stepping Stones)	Tickhill Road, Maltby S66 7NQ





Children's Centre	Barber's Crescent, Rawmarsh S62 6AD
Children's Centre (Thrybergh)	Thrybergh Primary School, S65 4JG
Children's Centre	Lime Grove, Swinton S65 4HQ

Specialist Customer Access Points

Key Choices Property Shop (Providing information about housing allocation services)	20 – 21 Howard Street, Rotherham S60 1QX
Information Centre (Providing information about local attractions, events and accommodation. A range of Rotherham and Yorkshire souvenirs are available)	40 Bridgegate, Rotherham S60 1PQ
Carers Corner (Providing information and support for carers based in Rotherham)	2 Drummond Street, Rotherham S65 1HY

Appendix 2 Customer Charter

The standards customers can expect from us:

 <h3>EASY ACCESS</h3>	 <h3>ON TIME</h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will make it easy for you to find out what services are available to you. ■ We will provide four main ways for you to obtain services – by website, telephone, in person or by email/letter. ■ We will make our opening hours clear. ■ We will make our application processes simple and easy to understand. ■ You will not have to repeat information. ■ We will provide modern, comfortable places for you to access services in person. ■ We will ask how you prefer to be contacted, and use this method where we are able. ■ We will provide information in other formats and languages upon request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will tell you how long it will take to deal with your service request. ■ We will tell you what will happen next and how you can get the service you require. ■ We will keep in touch and tell you how your request is progressing. ■ If we need to make an appointment to meet you, we will offer times which are convenient for you. ■ We will keep to our scheduled appointment times. ■ We will complete outstanding work within a reasonable timescale, which is agreed with you. ■ We will ensure that all the time which is allocated to you is spent with you.
 <h3>RIGHT RESULT</h3>	 <h3>TREATED AS A VALUED CUSTOMER</h3>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will provide you with information that is easy to understand. ■ We will aim to reach the right outcome for you. ■ We will take your views into account ■ We will offer you choices and alternatives. ■ We will give you an explanation for our decisions. ■ We will tell you what you need to do if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your service request ■ We will provide aftercare for some of our services, to check whether the service you are receiving is suitable for you. ■ We will ensure that you are kept informed of any changes to services. ■ We will tell you upfront about any costs you are responsible for. ■ We will work with others to ensure we are able to personalise the service we offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We will always put our customers 1st. ■ We will listen to your needs, allowing you time to fully explain your circumstances. ■ We will treat people fairly and with dignity. ■ We will take your needs seriously and treat you and your home with respect. ■ We will be honest about our service delivery timescales. ■ We will respect your privacy. ■ We will think about all the people involved in your service request, eg parents, carers, family and friends ■ We will be flexible in our approach, enabling customers to change their mind. ■ We will ask for your feedback, and act upon it ■ We will tell you how we are performing against our service standards. You can find this information at www.rotherham.gov.uk/performance
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Appendix 3

Our Customer Groups

50+ Group	Hard of Hearing Group
Rotherham Access Group	Hellaby Community Project
Arbour Drive Community Group	Henley Action Group
Parish Councils	Highton View Social Group
Beeversleigh Action Group	Housing Panel
TARA organisations	Learning Disability Partnership Board
Blackburn Community Partnership	Learning from Customers Forum
Brampton and West Melton Parish Community Partnership	Customer Inspection Service
Brinsworth Women's Group	PDSI Customer Inspection Team
Carers Forum	Meadows Community Partnership
Catcliffe Mother + Toddler Group	Rawmarsh and Parkgate Community Action Group
Clifton Community Partnership	Area Assembly Groups
Cortonwood Comeback	Rotherham Older People's Forum
Deaf Social Club	ROPES
Dinnington Community Development Forum	Visually Impaired Group
Dinnington Crime and Community Safety Group	Speak Up
Dinnington Youth Forum	Sunnyside Group

Direct Payments Service User Focus Group	Swinton Community Partnership
East Maltby Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership	Thorpe Hesley and Scholes Community Fund
Eastwood Village Community Group	Thurcroft Crime and Safety Forum
Wath Community Partnership	Domiciliary Care Forum
Wellgate, Broom Valley, Moorgate Planning Group	Residential and Nursing Care
Whiston Community Partnership	Provider Forum
Whiston Youth Sub Group	Inclusive Forum
Wickersley Community Planning steering group	Strategic Housing and Drugs Forum
Youth Cabinet	REMA
Voluntary Action Rotherham	University of 3 rd Age