

Customer Access Strategy 2022 - 2025

Foreword

The council is ambitious and supports and delivers innovative projects. Focusing on the delivery of digital services allows Elmbridge not only to support the future financial position of the council, but also to ensure that a consistent and efficient service is provided, maintaining high levels of customer service.

The Customer Access Strategy explains how we are transforming services we provide to our residents and businesses of Elmbridge and making best use of digital services to provide high quality and easy to use services.

Our aim is for customers to choose online services as their first option, where possible. We will continue to create and develop our online services so that they are intuitive and easy to use.

Providing a wide range of digital services will reduce the need for residents to travel to meet face to face and limiting reprographics services supports the reduction of our carbon footprint within the borough.

We recognise that not all our customers are confident using technology, or may not have access, therefore when designing our services, we are ensuring all needs are considered. The Customer Access Strategy details how we are **“Digital by default, Inclusive by design”**.

The timescales for delivering on this strategy are purposely short, the intention being to re-evaluate these objectives using contact data, customer insight and demographics.

Councillor Bruce McDonald
Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Development

Where do we want to get to?

By the end of 2025 we will have implemented customer access improvements which will consistently deliver a more efficient, effective and economic service across all front-facing council services. This will deliver better value for money and deliver efficiency savings. The targeted amount will be detailed during 2022.

We will increase usage of our digital services by:

- Reducing number of emails by 30%
- Reducing number of phone calls by 20%
- Reducing number of face-to-face visits by 20%

This approach will also free up capacity to help those customers who for any number of good reasons are not able to access digital services, by use of more traditional communication channels. We will not be leaving any customers behind.

We will report on our success in enhancing our already strong and effective customer experience through the following measures:

- 70% of customers contacted the council once only to resolve their enquiry
- 80% of customers rating our online services at 4 stars or more (out of 5)
- 80% of customers not using digital services confirming they were satisfied with time taken to resolve their enquiry

How will we get there?

Our plan is best expressed as “Digital by default, Inclusive by design”

Digital by default

- Communication and transactions will be **secure**
- Processes are designed to make our services **easy to use**
- Notifications at each transaction stage are used to provide **transparency** to customers of what’s happening to their issue and the status of service requests are updated in the online account
- We will let you know when you can expect to receive a response from us about your service request, the process will focus on being **efficient and timely**
- We will use customer insight and demographic data to analyse demand to enable us to **continuously improve our access** for customers

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- **Expand digital** services within the Elmbridge online account so users can access all council communications and services in one place.

Inclusive by design

- Our non-digital resources will be spent on the people **who need our help the most**, providing support by phone and face to face meetings
- We will use Zoom, Facetime, Teams and other such teleconferencing tools to minimise the requirement for customers to travel to the civic centre
- We will help those who have access to digital services but lack confidence in using by providing a telephony helpline for additional support and guidance
- We will ensure that customers with disabilities can easily use our website
- Act on customer feedback to improve take up of digital services
- Continue to focus on designing processes which aims to resolve most forms of contact at first point of contact.

Where are we now with our customer contact services?

Most residents in Elmbridge already access the internet on a regular basis.

- 94% of Elmbridge residents are online
- Resident population: 102,830 over 16s; 29,830 under 16s

However, we do need to consider those groups most likely to be at risk of digital exclusion, i.e. those aged 65+, those with a disability and those in lower socio-economic groups.

Covid-19 has spurred many more people to get online. Among 50 to 70-year-olds, 75% say they were making video calls more often during lockdown and 31% were emailing more.

A survey by Lloyds Bank (2020) found that the number of 70-year-olds who registered for online banking during lockdown tripled compared to the same time last year.

Many of our services are already online. Take-up is encouraging, but we want to do even better to ensure all our services are digital and accessible 24/7.

Governance

Services across the council are keen to improve digital services. However, resources are limited therefore our focus is to deliver on the objectives listed in the Action Plan. To ensure appropriate controls are in place, the Digital Transformation Governance Group will approve all customer access projects.

Service Heads will submit their business case to the Digital Transformation Governance Group for evaluation. The business case must meet the aims of the Customer Access Strategy in order to be considered for approval.

The Customer Access Strategy will be subject to an annual review to ensure that demographic and other changes in the Council are properly reflected.

Whilst this strategy supports the delivery of the action plan by 2025, it is recognised that actions may be amended to ensure that changing priorities are taken into account. However, any changes will adhere to the principles of the Customer Access Strategy.

A full review will be undertaken in 2025 to inform our residents, members and council employees how the strategy has contributed to the transformation of council services.