



# Customers at the Heart

## Our guiding principles

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council are committed to being a customer driven organisation and have reviewed, evaluated and redesigned council services putting customers at the heart of everything we do. We are focused on improving the whole experience for our customers so that we continue to deliver services that make a positive difference to the communities that we serve.

*"We will live and breathe the systems thinking principles and design all of our services from a customer perspective to solve the underlying issues rather than just the presenting issue (what the customer contacts us for in the first place). We will constantly evaluate the system in order to improve it from the customer perspective (and thus reduce the cost to the public purse) and this will be the responsibility of the entire workforce not just the Management Team."*

**Kevin Dicks (Chief Executive Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils)**

The Council and its partners are here to deliver what matters to our customers, in order to do this we have established our strategic purposes to ensure that we focus on what counts. We established these from listening to what our customers asked for and it is our aim to deliver as effectively as possible.

- Help me to be financially independent
- Keep my place safe and looking good
- Provide good things for me to see, do and visit
- Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
- Help me to live my life independently
- Help me to run a successful business

Customer Services is no longer a stand-alone service but is integral and a key value in every aspect of the work that the council does. To support this there are five guiding principles that all staff will follow to ensure customer excellence is adopted across the organisation at every contact.



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

*making  
a  
difference*

[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

## Customers at the Heart - Our guiding principles



### *I will resolve your query or get you to the person who can as soon as possible*

We know that it is important for customers to get the right answer or information when they contact us. Wherever possible customer enquiries will be dealt with at first contact, and if we are unable to give you all the information at this point we will let you know what you can expect, keep you informed and reassure you that we are taking the time to get it right. Wherever possible we will also work with partner organisations to ensure that we consider all services that are available locally, to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our customers.

### *I will ensure you can access the services you require in a way that suits you*

We are committed in providing services through the quickest and most efficient access channel for the customer, whether that is over the phone, online, face to face or via letter. We recognise that quick, simple and straightforward transactions are easily completed online or via the phone and therefore we are committed to making this possible for the appropriate services. We do recognise however that some customers may prefer or have more in depth and complex issues and may want to speak with us face to face.

### *I will make every effort to help you understand the information we present to you*

When we do provide information to our customers it is essential that this is in a format that is easy to understand. Our officers will ensure that they will take the time to explain to customers what they need to know, considering every customer's needs individually. When we write to our customers or provide information on the website it will be in plain English and presented in a way that will get the keys messages to customers. We will ensure that if needed we will provide information in a variety of formats or languages.

### *I will deal with your enquiry with consideration, compassion and empathy*

Customer service starts with our staff and they are key to ensuring we are a truly customer focused organisation. It is vital that all staff understand the value of great service and share the values and behaviours necessary to ensure we exceed our customer's expectations.

Customer service is a valuable skill that we recognize and promote within our teams. We value and encourage staff to take the time with their customers, to show that they are trying to understand their enquiry fully and any implications it may have caused. Through effective training, recruitment and ongoing reviews, managers will continue to ensure that staff retain the right values and have the understanding of how much of a difference they can make by the way in which they approach customer contact.



## Customers at the Heart - Our guiding principles



### *I will listen to you and what you have to say and take the right action when needed*

Listening is an essential way in which we understand what is important to our customers. By taking the time to listen to what our customers are saying, we will ensure that we are better placed to resolve their enquiry as soon as possible in a way that is important to them. By checking back that we have understood correctly and continuing to listen throughout we will ensure that we will remain focused on what is important to our customers and ensure that we continue to get it right.

### *What you can also expect*

In addition to the five guiding principles we know that our customers like to know what they can expect from us when they make specific contact.

*If you write to us by letter or email* and a response is required, we will respond to you as soon as possible after it has been received by us. If the issue will take some time to investigate or resolve we will tell you when you can expect to hear more from us.

In the case of emails, if the officer you have contacted is out of the office you will be advised when that officer will be available and who to contact in the meantime if your enquiry is urgent.

*If you visit us in person*, someone will see you as soon as possible to establish who the best person is to help you. If you need to see one of our specialist officers we will advise you of approximate wait times. If you are unable to wait we will advise you of alternative options.

If you need assistance with English a telephone interpreter can be provided.

If it is appropriate for you to have an appointment with a specialist officer we will make the necessary arrangements for you to see them at the time that is most convenient. If you need assistance with English an interpreter, or a British Sign Language interpreter (subject to availability) will be arranged for the appointment.

If you have an appointment with a member of staff they will always aim to see you on time, and ensure you are made aware if they are running more than 15 minutes late.

*If you phone us* your call will be answered as quickly as possible. Once answered your call will be forwarded to the officer best placed to answer your enquiry. If your enquiry can't be answered or the relevant officer is unavailable, then a message can be taken and you will be contacted once that officer is available.



## Customers at the Heart - Our guiding principles



### *If you make a complaint* we will:

- Contact you as soon as possible after we receive your complaint to discuss the matter further and agree with you the way forward.
- It will not be longer than three weeks before we respond to you and we will send you written confirmation of the outcome, if you request it. On many occasions a written response may not be required, if we have discussed the complaint outcomes with you, to your satisfaction.
- We prefer to do this by talking to you so please provide us with a telephone number when you make your complaint to ensure the quickest response.

### *If we have an appointment to visit you at home* we will:

- Ensure you understand the reason for the visit;
- Let you know if we cannot keep the appointment, or if we are going to be delayed;
- Ensure you and your home is treated with respect;
- Let you know what we will do next if follow up action is necessary.

### *How will we know if we are getting it right?*

Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council have developed measures that demonstrate our ability to deliver what matters to the customer against the 6 Strategic Purposes. They are presented on the measures dashboard and are used by members, managers and officers across the organisation to understand what is happening and to ensure we remain focused on what matters. By effectively reviewing these measures, the Council understand trends and changes in customer demand so that we can address and respond to these changes swiftly and appropriately.

The Council aims to always be able to exceed our customers' expectations, but also understands that there may be times when we might fall short. All staff will speak to customers who want to share details either positive or negative about the experience they have had with the Council. The officer will then record their feedback on the Complaints and Compliments system, which will then be passed to the most relevant manager to look into. By listening to complaints we have an opportunity to understand the issues and areas where we as an organisation can improve or change. We will also reinforce and recognise when staff have excelled and delivered excellence to their customer/s, and look at opportunities to continue to be able to offer this level of service to all.

