

Customer First Strategy

2016-2018

Introduction

As a Council we are transforming the way we work. Over the next two years we will:

- maximise the benefits provided by new technology to work more efficiently;
- develop a collaborative 'One Team' ethos to enable us to work together more intelligently;
- design and deliver services which put the needs of our customers first.

What is Customer First?

Customer First is:

"Putting customers at the heart of service delivery; ensuring value for money, flexibility and choice."

Our Customer First principles are:

- Meeting customer needs
- Being accessible
- Improving customer experience
- Providing value.

Who are our customers?

Our customers are anyone we provide a service, information or advice to.

Our key customer groups are:

- Residents
- Businesses
- Visitors
- Tourists
- Other councils
- Charities
- Partner organisations
- Community groups
- Staff
- Councillors

What does Customer First mean in practice?

It means:

Meeting Customer Needs

- We will provide an efficient, accurate, transparent service.
- We will own and respond to all issues customers present to us.

- We will keep our promises.
- We will have clear standards that our customers can expect and judge us by.
- All staff will take responsibility for providing excellent customer service.

Being Accessible

- Our communication will meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- Customers will be able to access our services online, face to face and over the telephone.
- We will work with partners to deliver our services.
- We will work collaboratively with the voluntary and community sectors to improve access.

Improving Customer Experience

- Our workforce will be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing demands of our customers.
- We will monitor customer satisfaction to enable improvement.
- We will monitor our performance to ensure our customers receive a high quality service.

Providing Value

- We will make most of our services available online.
- We will make our services more accessible and better value for money.
- We will ensure our customers can contact us easily.
- We will ensure our staff have the right skills and knowledge to meet customer expectations.

Our Customer First standards

We aim to satisfy all customer queries at the first point of contact with the Council.

We aim to make all of our services customer focused, accessible and flexible.

In terms of communication:

Writing to us

We will respond fully to your enquiry within 10 working days or acknowledge receipt of your correspondence and let you know how long it will take to respond fully to your enquiry.

E-Mailing us

We will acknowledge receipt of your e-mail within 1 working day and respond fully to your enquiry within 10 working days.

Calling us

The Community Contact Centre is the main telephone service for Hastings Borough Council. You will receive clear and straightforward information about our services.

We aim to minimise the amount of time you wait to speak to someone and will keep you informed of current waiting times.

Visiting our offices

We will aim to provide a polite, welcoming and efficient service, resolving your enquiry first time wherever possible. We will ensure ensure that staff members are smart and presentable and wear name badges.

We aim to deal with your enquiry in 15 minutes but at busy times you may need to wait longer, however we will tell you how long it is likely to be before are seen.

We will measure our success against these standards.

Why is it important?

Customer First is important because we want to provide a better service for our customers and improve customer satisfaction. It is a priority in our Corporate Plan.

Our contact with you

We will always try our hardest to provide the best experience for our customers. Occasionally we will get it wrong. When we do we will take responsibility, do what we can to fix our mistake and make sure that we learn from it.

In these instances we will ask that customers are patient and respectful to our staff. Where possible we will ask that customers work with us to fix the error. We want there to be mutual respect and trust in our relationship with customers.

Abuse of our staff will not be tolerated.

How we are doing this

Projects

Review and Redesign our Services

We are business process mapping (BPM) all our services. This allows us to understand what's working well and what's not and to identify how things could be improved. We are then redesigning how we work to meet our customers' needs.

Making Services Accessible Online

We are making many of our services available online including: paying council tax, reporting fly tipping, reporting a missed bin collection and applying for licences.

All of our online services will be accessible on My Hastings and through the Council website.

Improving Customer Communication

We have introduced a new customer relationship management (CRM) system which enables us to improve our interactions with customers. The CRM will continue to help us to work more collaboratively and intelligently as 'One Council' and will mean a better quality of transaction for our customers.

We are re-developing our website to make it more customer focused and accessible and will be seeking customer feedback on how to make further improvements.

Communication

Communication will be essential to the successful delivery of Customer First.

We will:

- Communicate Customer First with all staff and our partners to ensure collective buy in.
- Tell our customers about how Customer First can benefit them
- Meet our Customer First standards in all our communications with customers.

Internal communications action plan summary

All staff and partners will need to be made aware of our Customer First vision and embrace its standards and principles.

Core internal messages of Customer First:

- An opportunity not a burden
- Raises the profile of the Council
- Creates better access to services for the public
- Makes us more efficient and better value
- Makes us more professional
- Will lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction
- Creates meaningful partnerships between the Council, business, the public and community sectors
- Underpins the new organisational culture

These messages will be delivered by:

- Word of mouth – Transformation Team
- Internal newsletters
- All staff emails
- Team meetings and 1:1s
- DMT briefings – Directors, Assistant Directors
- Communications Board
- The new intranet once it has been developed
- All staff corporate briefings

Key internal audience:

- All HBC staff
- All HBC Councillors
- Our partners

External communications action plan summary

We will make our customers aware of how Customer First benefits them and in what ways.

Core external Messages of Customer First:

- Faster responses to your requests and queries
- A more joined up communication from the Council, which keeps track of and accounts for all of your interactions with different services
- A host of our services available for you to access easily online 24/7
- Easier more efficient and flexible ways for you to transact council services
- We are shaping our services around your needs
- We will continue to improve and develop our services using customer feedback

These messages will be delivered by:

- Word of mouth
- Signposted on the new Hastings Online website
- My Hastings Online itself
- Contact centre staff
- Using corporate social media accounts
- Marketing campaigns

Key external audience:

- Businesses
- Residents
- Charities
- Community groups

- Visitors
- Other councils

Further Information

For further information please email transformation@hastings.gov.uk