

WDC Channel Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The channels our customers use vary from more traditional ones like face-to-face, and telephone, to newer channels like social media and mobile web access. The accountability for all channels now sits within one service area. This will enable all existing strategies for each channel to be managed effectively. We have a number of strategies for individual channels and this strategy unites them. By setting out the overarching principles and supporting service areas to use customer data, we can improve the efficiency of and access to services.

The channel strategy explains how WDC will meet the demands of our customers using the resources we have available. Channels that are efficient & effective deliver services that customers desire without wasting time, money or effort for either the customer or the Council.

The overarching Channel Strategy Principles are:

- Wherever possible and valuable for customers, move transactions and information to the web;
- Continue face to face services, and not just at One Stop Shops;
- Review use of the CSC and levels/depth of expertise required of CSC advisers;
- Investigate use of social media, DigiTV etc where valuable for customers;
- Systems thinking work to be end to end, to include all customer access channels;
- Systems thinking – put experts close to the customer where possible;
- Encourage customers to self-serve.

The Channel Strategy is based on customer insight - understanding customer behaviour, and their needs from a service. This ensures we are focussing our resources on the channels and services important to our customers. Many Councils are focussed on moving customers to cheaper channels, most often the internet. At Warwick District Council we have a different view - we want customers to be able to use the most effective channel for them, where we can do so with the resources we have available. Rather than putting every service on to every channel, service areas should consider the customer demand and the value of the service on any channel. The majority of customer contact currently comes through customer services, so that contacts are stored in one system. The use of this system is being evaluated to ensure it is providing value for money.

We want our staff and councillors to use the internet to assist customers as much as possible. This will enable us to spot areas where we can improve services as we will see things from a customer perspective. It will also point customers to the right place so they can get information themselves next time.

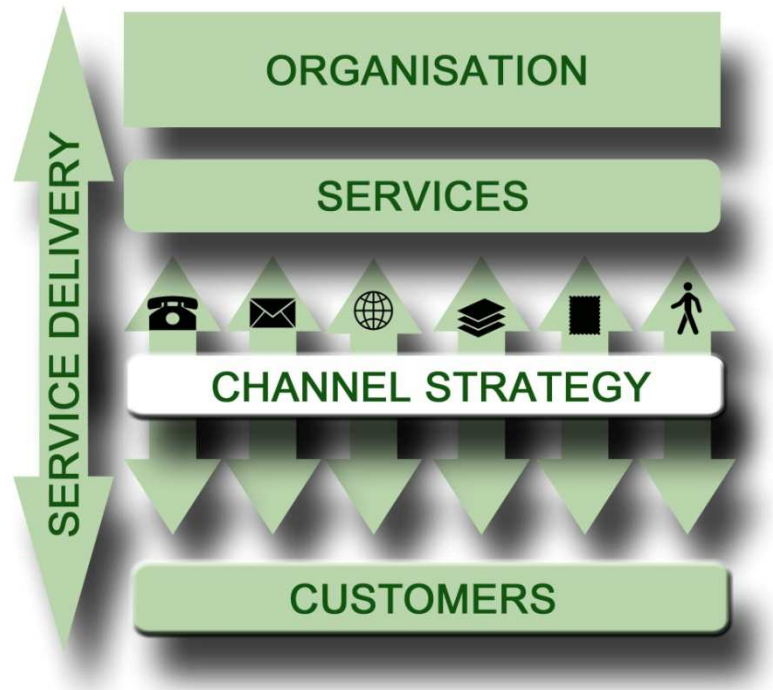
A number of Actions have been identified to ensure that the Channel Strategy can deliver improved services. Key areas include improving the service customers receive when they contact us and working with service areas to review customer and channel data to drive improvements. We will continue to evaluate new ways of working where customer demand is high. We will ensure that our services remain accessible.

Part 1 - Introduction

WHAT IS A CHANNEL STRATEGY?

Warwick District Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with the authority, (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means), are a critical part of public service provision, and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

A channel strategy is an organisation's plan for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. A channel strategy explains how an organisation will meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the customer. A channel strategy is not simply a plan to move service provision to online channels.



WHY IS A CHANNEL STRATEGY IMPORTANT NOW?

Customers receive a high standard of customer service from many public and private sector organisations. However, citizens sometimes have low expectations of services provided by local government, and it will be necessary to exceed rather than meet these expectations to achieve channel shift to cheaper and/or more effective channels. To achieve this, the public sector must continue to raise its own standards of service across all the channels it uses and offers. At Warwick District Council we are using systems thinking to improve our services with the customer in mind.

In order to meet the needs of customers, Warwick District Council must provide services that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Effective
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Robust
- Secure

It is also important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well their skill sets when selecting channels. At Warwick District Council we will ensure that we introduce services to channels customers want, basing our decisions on data rather than theory.

Rising internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for public service providers. Competent online services are easy and quick to use, available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden. Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers and taxpayers.

The public sector must also meet the needs of people who do not (yet) have access to the internet. 'Digital Inclusion' therefore is a core element of any government/public sector channel strategy.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The need for insight

The process of developing and implementing a channel strategy needs to be guided by insight, and insight specifically relating to:

- The customer – we have used Mosaic data and customer service data,
- The services an organisation is providing and each service area in question
- The current delivery channels at the organisation's disposal as well as those that may be available to be/need to be used in future, including the volumes & cost of contact
- Other organisation-specific micro/macro factors that may have an impact on service provision and delivery, including the success & waste in each system. The major factors impacting Warwick District Council are systems thinking, minimizing environmental impact, and budgetary constraints.

It is also important to understand the wider online services market, as expectations of online services are driven by customer experiences of using similar services of other organisations. Personalization used to be a key driver of online services though there is very limited demand from customers. (Reference - <http://www.out-law.com/page-3982>)

Organisational challenge

In considering a channel strategy, there is often a considerable challenge and change to existing ways of working. A channel strategy needs to become an integral part of the structure of the organisation and the way the objectives of the organisation are realised. Case studies have shown that improved services, efficiencies and improved customer satisfaction result from customer access being centrally managed. The current WDC structure has all the customer access channels in one service area. However, there is limited management capacity to lead and support teams in delivering good customer service and appropriate channels. The challenge will be building on the good work already done and supporting our teams to continue to focus on customers. We also work closely in partnership with Warwickshire County Council to deliver effective face to face and telephone services. Continuing to provide the services through the most appropriate channel will be a challenge considering the reduced resources available.

In a time of diminishing resources, we will focus our time on channels which are favoured by our customers. Priorities for action will be based on demand. For example, the majority of our customers use the internet, so if we improve that channel it will have a big impact. The website is the most popular customer services channel with visits having grown from 50,000 a month to around 90,000 a month between 2007 and 2011.

We also need to recognise that people will use different channels not just for different types of interactions, but also to suit their own convenience. Particularly at local level, an integrated channel strategy is required that takes into account the varied ways in which local people may want to interact with the council. Customer measures often focus on the Customer service aspect, for example that staff are polite and helpful. We need to move to measuring the customer's entire interaction with the council, so that they get effective & efficient services. We need to be aware of the customer journey through the entire system, no matter which channel is used.

Focus on the Customer

Fit for the Future is the Council's strategy for delivering the vision for the District - a great place to live, work and visit. The strategy has three drivers – improving services, making savings and changing the culture of the organisation. All of these will continue to influence the Channel Strategy. We are striving to be an organisation that focuses on customers and uses data to make decisions. Ensuring good customer service is everyone's responsibility.

Changing our culture to a constant emphasis on the customer has influenced how we use the channels. The channels are there for our customers to get information rather than for us to give information. For example, many staff recognise that the website is a first port of call for customers, so updates are frequently posted there first. Not only is this making the service more effective for customers, it improves efficiency since customers do not have to contact the CSC. We provide systems thinking, training programmes, customer service workshops and coaching to support and encourage this change in culture.

Mosaic customer data is being used more and more to help understand our customer needs and preferences. For example, certain customer groups read local papers and prefer face to face contact to internet contact. Other groups prefer to use internet and mobile channels and get their information from the national press. There is also a wealth of data on the channels our customers use and how they use them. For example, the majority of web users are there for information rather than transactions. We will focus first on the common case rather than the exception, to improve access for as many as possible. At all times we will ensure that all customers have fair and equal access to services.

Part 2 – Basic Principles & Scope

PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

To outline the principles for the ways in which Warwick District Council will deliver its services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the citizen in mind.

SCOPE

1. This strategy document sets out the basic principles by which Warwick District Council will deliver its services to the public through the contact channels currently available.

Contact channels in scope include:

- Face to face
 - Email
 - Internet (including internet kiosks, partner and commercial websites)
 - Digital TV
 - Telephone (including Text Phone)
 - Mobile technology (including SMS text messaging, apps and mobile web)
 - Post/Paper
 - New Media such as Twitter (outbound and inbound)
 - Media & Marketing
 - Payment Channels (including electronic, cheque, & cash)
2. This document focuses on three key types of contacts between the authority and the citizen
 - **Transactions** (e.g. registering for elections, reporting a problem or paying a bill)
 - **Interactions** (e.g. obtaining advice, public consultations, petitioning)
 - **Information Provision** (e.g. swim times, leaflets, web pages)
 3. This strategy should be relevant to the nature of the services provided by the authority and ensure that its services are provided through a range of contact channels appropriate to the citizens' individual needs and preferences in a non-discriminatory way.

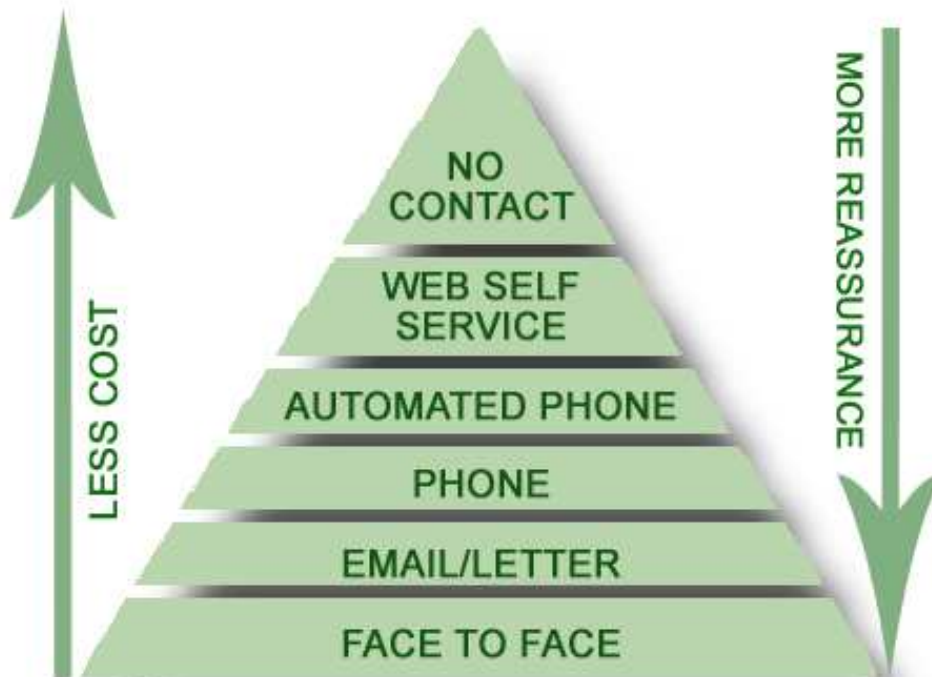
CHANNELS HIERARCHY & DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The choice of contact channels available to the public is growing all of the time as new technologies are developed and released. For example in the last 5 years we have seen the emergence and growth of channels such as digital social media (such as Facebook, alternate realities and Twitter), mobile internet, interactive TV and more recently mobile phone applications (apps).

Without a channel strategy many organisations typically adopt one of two approaches to using these channels by either 1) launching all of their products and services on all new channels without much thought to the relevance and cost of doing so or 2) focusing on switching their customer contact to the cheapest channel (often assumed to be the internet) without much thought as to the relevance of this channel to their entire customer base.

There is a generally accepted model for the effectiveness of the major channels of contact available today as shown below

CHANNEL EFFECTIVENESS



What this model shows is that as we move up the triangle the cost of delivery typically gets cheaper for the organisation. However for some types of contact a greater level of human contact is required, particularly for contacts that require some level of reassurance.

For example, imagine you've received a letter asking you to pay a bill or the bailiffs will turn up at your house. You've just paid the bill and now want reassurance that your personal belongings are safe. You are unlikely to log on and have a look at the organisation's website's FAQ page for reassurance (even though this might be the most cost-effective solution for the organisation) but you may be more inclined to ring up the contact centre to request a letter confirming that matters are in hand. In this example, there may be a case for having online FAQs relating to debt recovery in terms of best practice, but there is probably little chance of shifting this individual contact online.

It is therefore vital to fully understand each type of contact and the level of reassurance that the customer is likely to require before focusing the organisation's efforts on the design of any contact channel for that service. This ties in with the systems thinking approach.

There may be little hope of shifting the channels that a certain group uses if that group simply doesn't access that channel. For example, internet penetration is generally very low amongst the jobless, the financially excluded, older people and people who do not read or speak English. Interestingly however, more than 25% of our website users are over 60. Therefore, it may not be a good use of corporate time, and taxpayer's money, to attempt to shift these contacts online. Conversely, mobile telephone penetration is very high amongst teenagers, so SMS messaging might be a good channel to advise of sport or cultural activities. Customer insight goes a long way in the design of any channel strategy.

In Warwick District, the top ten customer groups are:

Rank		Mosaic Public Sector Types	Number of Households	%
1	G26	Well educated singles living in purpose built flats	4,391	7.33
2	D14	Older people living in large houses in mature suburbs	3,379	5.64
3	B05	Better off empty nesters in low density estates on town fringes	2,516	4.20
4	G32	Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses	2,251	3.76
5	D16	Higher income families concerned with education and careers	2,216	3.70
6	C09	Successful older business leaders living in sought-after suburbs	2,213	3.69
7	E17	Comfortably off suburban families weakly tied to their local community	2,211	3.69
8	F22	Busy executives in town houses in dormitory settlements	2,130	3.55
9	F24	Young parents new to their neighbourhood, keen to put down roots	2,056	3.43
10	L55	Capable older people leasing / owning flats in purpose built blocks	2,048	3.42

Looking in more detail, we can see how different groups of customers are likely to use our services, bearing in mind local differences like the high proportion of older website visitors:

G26 Well educated singles living in purpose built flats	
Key Features Young professionals Late 20s / early 30s Flats Walk to work / commute by train Transience Friends from university / work Ethical products Magazines	Communication Preferences Access Information Internet and National Papers Not Face to Face, Local Papers Service Channels Internet, Telephone, Mobile Phone and Post Not Face to Face
D14 Older people living in large houses in mature suburbs	
Key Features Attractive spacious houses Owner occupied Suburbs Active minds Recently retired professionals Empty nesters Comfortable but budget carefully Quality and service	Communication Preferences Access Information Magazines Not Internet, Interactive TV, SMS Text Service Channels Post Not Internet, Telephone, Mobile Phone
B05 Better off empty nesters in low density estates on town fringes	
Key Features Spacious bungalows Retired married couples and widows Self employed, accountant, teacher Good social networks Pride in home and gardens Responsible Hardworking Savings and investments	Communication Preferences Access Information Face to Face, Magazines, Local Papers Not Internet, SMS Text, Interactive TV or National Papers Service Channels Face to Face, Post Not Internet, Telephone or Mobile Phone

There are even more factors to consider including “channel hopping”, (a customer using different channels for the same transaction depending on what is convenient at the time) and the public’s increasing confidence in new channels that develops over years & sometimes months, creating a changing landscape. For example, the rapidly accelerating use of mobile internet via smartphones.

The key factors to an effective channel strategy therefore are:

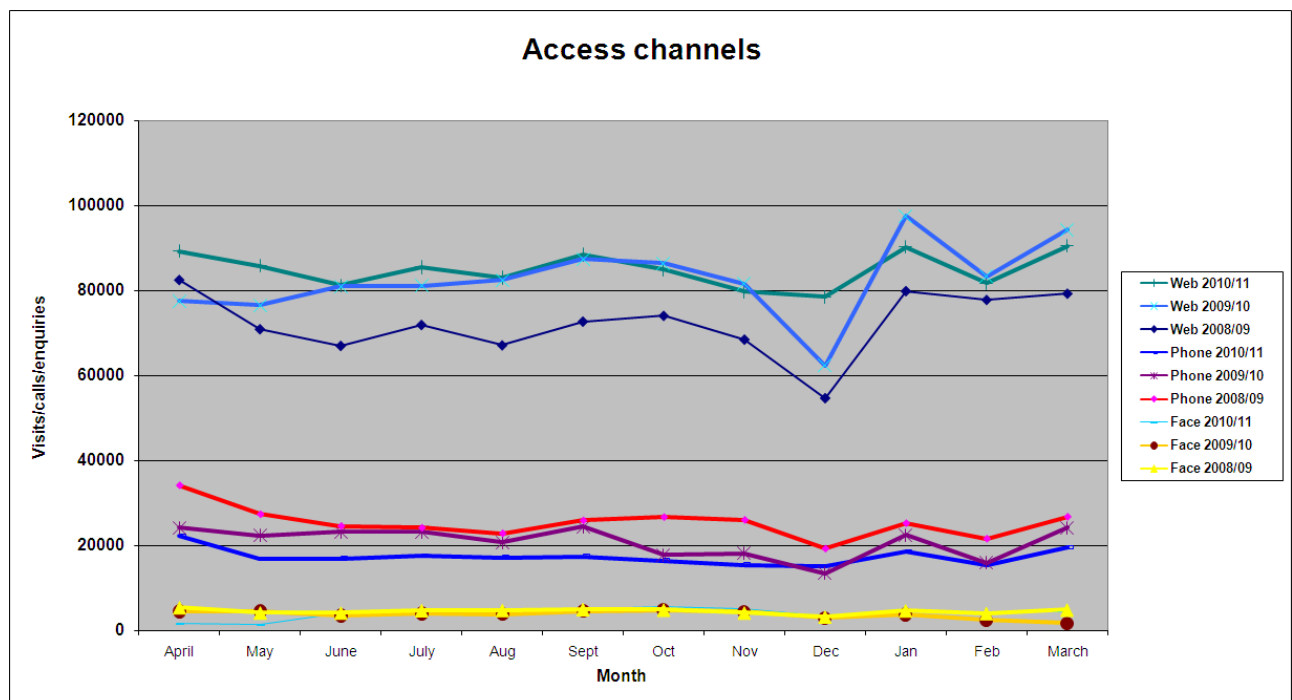
1. **Detail** - the deliberate design of the channel strategy for **each type of service**, bearing in mind the level of human interaction required and the needs of the targeted customer base
2. **Fluidity** – the constant reviewing of the effectiveness of the channel strategy for each type of contact bearing in mind changing technologies, channel hopping and changing habits
3. **Simplicity** – to drive a shift in behaviour the optimum channels for the organisation should be the easiest to use for the customer
4. **Inclusion** – no group should be denied access to a service because of disability, language or cost of the access channel (e.g. mobile phone costs, broadband access).
5. **Cost effectiveness** – finding ways in which to deliver services effectively but at lower cost.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

The chart below shows the relative popularity of three major channels over the last three years. Overall, there has been a shift to online services and some reduction in phone calls. Detailed data shows that when specific events happen, many customers use the online channel to get information. Key examples include the snow in December & January 2010 and 2011. By running a proof of concept we are able get data on the likely success of new channels as well as more data on the customers using them. By running marketing campaigns we encourage customers to shift to other channels. For example, DigiTV users tend to access HomeChoice and job searches, and are less likely to have access to the internet.

Warwick District has not done detailed calculations of the costs of each channel. Generally accepted benchmark costs per interaction are:

- Face to Face £6.72
- Telephone £2.22
- Web £0.29



Part 3 – WDC Channel Strategies

LOCAL CONTEXT

Warwick District has a population of 135,700, the largest population of all the Districts and Boroughs. The District has seen the largest percentage increase in its population over the past 5 years - 7,000 people, representing a 5.4% increase. The District contains the four main towns of Warwick, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and Whitnash and a number of smaller, more rural settlements. In terms of population projections, Warwick's population is projected to increase by 31.6% from 2006 to 2031.

Warwick District performs well across almost all economic indicators; employment rates are high and income levels are above average, but there have been less positive consequences in terms of housing affordability and traffic congestion. The District has a relatively high concentration of jobs in financial and business services, as well as public sector occupations. Tourism is an important part of the local economy, supporting around 5,000 jobs.

Warwick District has the highest non-white British population in the County, at about 9% of the total population. Leamington Spa in particular has a comparatively high number of Asian or Asian British residents, and more recently, growing Portuguese and Polish communities.

The county has high average broadband take up (over 80%) but with around 20% of residents have slow internet connections. At a national level, the ownership of mobile phones is high (above 90%). A quarter of all adults and half of teenagers now have smartphones (for example iPhone or Blackberry). The use of mobile devices like smartphones to access the internet is increasing rapidly. The proportion of homes in the UK with Digital TV is over 90%.

The Mosaic socio-demographic classification dataset shows the District has a greater representation of 'Educated, young, single people living in areas of transient populations,' over 3 times the County average, highlighting the large student population predominantly based in Leamington Spa. The District is also over-represented in the category group A, 'Career professionals living in sought after locations'.

Like other parts of the County, there are pockets of both affluence and deprivation across Warwick District, although the balance is towards relatively low levels of deprivation. The most deprived area (part of Crown ward) features in the most deprived 20% nationally, although the least deprived communities (particularly parts of Kenilworth) are comfortably within the least deprived 5% nationally.

Warwick District residents have specific needs and preferences as to how they would like to contact the authority. This integrated channel strategy seeks to provide a full range of choices of access designed to ensure that no individual, group or community is disadvantaged through lack of access to the services the Council offers.

OVERARCHING CHANNEL STRATEGY

The overarching strategy is to use the most appropriate channels to deliver services based on customer demand and preferences.

At a national level, the push is for services to be "Digital by Default". Many councils are focussed on moving customers to cheaper channels, most often the internet. At Warwick District Council we have a different view - we want customers to be able to use the most effective channel for them, where we can do so with the resources we have available. Rather than putting every service on to every channel, service areas should consider the customer demand and the value of the service on any channel.

The Channel Strategy Principles are:

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- Encourage customers to self-serve.

The majority of customer contact currently comes through customer services, so that all contacts with the customer are stored in one system. The value of this system is being evaluated in 2011/12 and any major changes will be reflected in an updated channel strategy.

We want our staff and councillors to use the internet to assist customers as much as possible. This will enable us to spot areas where we can improve services as we will see things from a customer perspective. It will also point customers to the right place so they can get information themselves next time.

OWNERSHIP OF WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

Warwick District Council's Channel Strategy and its implementation will be the responsibility of the Head of Corporate & Community Services. A key part of the ownership is ensuring that the customer channels are flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of customers. The Head of Corporate & Community Services will focus on supporting service areas to improve access to services and on improving the customer experience when they contact the Council. The delivery of the Channel Strategy will involve all service areas.

REVIEW PERIOD OF WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CHANNEL STRATEGY

Warwick District Council will treat this strategy as "business as usual" with a view to constantly evolving the strategy. The use of systems thinking to improve our services and cut out waste is ongoing. Because of this, things are changing quickly and many experiments are running. The outcomes of these are very likely to influence the Channel strategy and the action plans.

A formal review and re-publishing of this document will be made in January of each year subsequent to its initial publication.

The majority of customer channels use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, to keep all customer contact information in one place. The current system was jointly purchased for all local councils in the County, via Warwickshire Direct. The current software contract runs until December 2013. Analysis is currently being undertaken by all partners on the value of the CRM and what would be required of a new product if purchased. This is a major piece of work which will impact the Channel Strategy so during 2011 and 2012 it will be monitored closely.

GOVERNANCE OF CONTACT CHANNELS AT WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Warwick District Council has already adopted the recommended structure for governance of contact channels. All customer channels are within one service area of the council, including website and emails. The Media and Communications team is currently in the process of moving to the Corporate and Community Service Area. The owner of all channels is the Head of Corporate & Community Services. The digital inclusion and accessibility strategies are also owned by the Head of Corporate & Community Services.

We will make our customers lives easier by seeking to get it right first time, through every channel

Local authorities are fundamental points of contact for the citizen when seeking access to public services. They provide key services for their local communities that greatly affect the quality of life for individual citizens and the overall community.

The customer experience for both citizens and businesses when contacting their local council should be one which is responsive, timely and efficient.

However, both local authorities and their customers also have limited resources and want to interact as efficiently as possible. By identifying customer contact that is 'avoidable', the local authority and its partners are better placed to redesign the way services and information are made more accessible for their customers, so they do not have to make unnecessary, valueless contacts which are both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider. We will use systems thinking to identify these contacts. Warwick District Council will work with its partners and service areas to maintain or improve First Point of Contact (FPOC) resolution rates.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Unnecessary Contact

- 1. Implement Tell Us Once service with partners, to reduce the number of contacts customers need to make on registering a birth or death.***
- 2. Review the First Point of Contact results and work with service areas to improve the system where they are consistently low.***
- 3. Review variances in demand and be proactive in managing and exploiting it***
- 4. Work with service areas to improve communications & reduce waste***

Performance Management and Governance

- FPOC and demand levels will continue to be measured and reviewed on a monthly basis

CHANNEL SHIFT STRATEGY

To design cost effective, efficient and user friendly means of contacting the council and then encourage our customers to use the channels that work best for them

Channel Shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to access services via channels other than those they normally choose. Channel Shift for Warwick District Council does not mean making every possible service available on the internet.

Deliberate channel shift is the design and marketing of effective and efficient channels because they are the most appropriate channels for the type of contact, customer and organisation in question. Channel shift forms one part of an overall channel strategy, and implemented well it can lower costs, build reputation, empower the citizen and improve the overall service proposition. Shifting customers to particular channels involves behaviour change on the citizen's part, but once they are aware of the channels available, they will use the one that works best for them.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Create Channel Shift

- 1. Encourage staff to use the public website in their day to day work.***
- 2. Collect data on the change in demand or channel from the introduction of online waste and permit renewals, and use this to drive future channel shift.***

- 3. Provide data on web “most popular” pages and exit pages to service areas, and use to make identify areas for channel shift.**

Performance Management and governance

- Along with customer feedback, abandonment & failure on the website will be analysed and corrections made accordingly.
- The Head of Corporate & Community Services will have overall responsibility for all channels, including Media and Communications.

DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

<i>To continue to work with Partners to enable customers to get online and be confident online</i>

Over 20% of the UK population do not use online channels. Exclusion from access to digital channels matters for these users, especially as the digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest needs from public services.

It also matters for the delivery of efficient public services, because when people cannot access services online they invariably access them via alternative means which are generally more expensive. The priorities set out in the Digital Britain report reinforce the importance of digital inclusion; the report sets out the Government's plans to drive digital participation in the context of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan and the proposed Digital Switchover of Public Services programme which is due to start in 2012. The report also reiterates the Government's commitment to ensuring that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens.

It is therefore important that any channel strategy includes plans for communicating with these hard to reach groups.

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Reduce Digital Exclusion

- 1. Promote & Support Race Online 2012, including encouraging staff volunteers.**
- 2. Work with partners to bid for broadband expansion funding in the District.**
- 3. Work with partners to provide public internet access**

Performance Management and Governance

- The Head of Corporate & Community Services will have the accountability for Warwick District Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy

<i>To provide a range of options to assist customers to use our channels</i>

What is an “Accessibility of Contact” Strategy?

In the context of this document, accessibility of contact refers to the ease or difficulty that a citizen may experience whilst using different electronic access channels to obtain services from the authority. For example, someone with hearing difficulties may find the telephone unusable and may prefer to communicate through email. Equally a customer who does not have English as their first language may not be able to access any contact channel without appropriate translation services.

We currently have a number of options to ensure our services are accessible. Staff are trained in the use of Plain English in all our communications. Translation and interpretation is available for all channels. All of our documents can be converted to large print or Braille. The WDC website has achieved accessibility accreditations set against international guidelines since 2006. The website text size is easily changed and there is software to convert to “read aloud” any words selected on screen (BrowseAloud).

The 3 Key Actions That We Will Take To Provide Access For All

- 1. Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on the channels***
- 2. Work with partners to bid for broadband expansion funding in the District***
- 3. Enhance and promote the DigiTV service***

Performance Management and Governance

- To maintain Accessibility Accreditations for our website based on testing with disabled users.
- Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment of the channel mix and regularly consult with advocacy groups and make reasonable adjustments to the channels as needed.
- Data collected on users and services accessed via DigiTV for SMT decision.

Part 4 – Strategies For Specific Channels

TELEPHONE STRATEGY

Get the right level of expertise in the call centre, build resilience to deal with peaks in demand, and reduce the number of waste calls by working with service areas.

Since 2009 there has been one local telephone number for customers to call – 410410. We work closely with WCC to deliver telephone services, and will be integrating the CSC team in 2011/12. We have focussed our systems thinking work on areas with the largest demand in the Customer Service Centre. The first two interventions were on Benefits & Housing Repairs. By using systems thinking the overall service to customers was improved.

The 3 Key Actions To Provide Easy Telephone Access

- 1. Review the collection of customer satisfaction data for telephone***
- 2. Integrate the WCC CSC to build resilience and improve the quality of service.***
- 3. Improve service quality by working with services to improve end to end systems.***

Performance Management and Governance

- The person with overall responsibility for this channel is the Head of Corporate & Community Services, working in partnership with WCC
- To use telephone call data and customer feedback to identify areas of improvement within the council and work to eliminate red tape, process failure and unnecessary cost to the public
- To seek further opportunities in working with other public sector contact centres to improve overall service, accessibility and improve value for money

MOBILE PHONE STRATEGY

Use mobile phone technologies tactically to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase the speed of communication or reduce direct contact.

WDC is trialling a third party system for communicating general information with customers through text messages. This trial will partly inform the council's approach to text messaging within the overall channel strategy. In addition, some service areas are considering bolt-ons to existing back office systems in order to communicate account-specific information with customers. We will continue to review the service to ensure it meets customer needs

WDC has a contract until 2012 to provide cross-platform services and information through the Looking Local service. Looking Local provides integrated services on Digital TV (Sky and Virgin), mobile, and iPhone and Android apps, through a single content management system (CMS) which is owned, supported and managed by Kirklees Council. Whilst content is less extensive than it is online, it includes real time travel information, job searches and Homechoice bidding. We will continue to review these services to ensure they meet customer needs.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop Mobile Telephone Access

- 1. Continue use of 410410 to reduce cost of call for customers using mobiles***
- 2. Complete the experiment using text messages and recommend the way forward***
- 3. Continue to take advantage of mobile applications which will assist customers***

Performance Management and Governance

- Performance and usage of this channel will be monitored as services are developed

To use customer feedback and data to make improvements to our web channels, recognising that many customers use the web channel for information rather than transactions

Use of the website continues to increase, showing that there is real customer demand. The way customers are accessing the website is also changing. In 2011 there was a fivefold increase in the use of mobile devices and this trend is likely to continue. Many customers bypass the home page, and use search engines to find the specific information they wish, going straight to service area pages. By focusing on the way customers access the website and the top tasks, we can prioritise improvements.

The website provides customer focussed information and transactional services. All content - be it information or transactional - is designed, organised and written based on data/evidence relating to online customers and user testing with customers. We aim to make our customer's top tasks as usable and accessible as we can. At the same time we aim, where appropriate, to reduce demand on other customer service channels and to aid efficiency in the back office. This evidence-based approach will continue to drive future developments and improvements to the site.

In line with recommendations by the government's UK Digital Champion, all council web content and services must be available through the single warwickdc.gov domain. There will be no departmental or vanity websites. This approach leads to an improved experience for the customer, less duplication and waste and more efficient content management and support. We will continue to ensure that we make the website as accessible as possible.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop Web Access

- 1. Optimise the website for mobile web access***
- 2. Review & decide on a Content Management System***
- 3. Review website self serve options for customers***

Performance Management and Governance

- To ensure that the website is available and operational 24/7
- To maintain overall service excellence, evidenced by customer feedback, user data and external accessibility and usability reviews
- To ensure the site is user tested and follows web usability guidelines.

FACE TO FACE STRATEGY

To make the most of our existing face to face services, focussing on key areas of most value to customers & encouraging use of cheaper channels where appropriate

The Council has invested significantly in face to face services, and these are valued by those customers who use them. We work closely with WCC and other partners to provide a professional, consistent and friendly service in five One Stop Shop locations. In 2011, the main priority is the review and implementation of integrated staffing in library locations. We will also work with partners to develop innovative face to face channels medium to long term – for example the Kenilworth Public Service Centre.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Face to Face Provisions

- 1. Review the options of working with WCC to increase access to library facilities, including integrated staffing***

2. ***Work with service areas to enhance face to face channels where there is a need***
3. ***Review the business case for moving the Leamington OSS to a location which is easier for customers to access***

Performance Management and Governance

- Customers will be seen at the appointed time or, if we are delayed, will receive an explanation and be kept informed
- Customers satisfaction measures are reviewed monthly

POST/PAPER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Reduce the amount of post and paper communication by targeted use of electronic channels

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Post/Paper Provisions

1. ***Ensure key leaflets and information are easily available online & encourage staff to use them***
2. ***Increase use of email for billing, prioritising Revenues & Benefits***
3. ***Investigate the benefits and risks of a corporate database***

Performance Management and Governance

- Printing and postage costs monitored, especially in areas of high volume
- Monitor demand across all channels for a representative sample of information

EMAIL STRATEGY

Reduce the amount of email communication by better use of integrated forms and other electronic channels

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Email Provisions

1. ***Review the areas of incoming email demand and use to prioritise integrated form creation***
2. ***Review use of email addresses across the Council and determine how best to enable customers to opt in to email updates (rather than post)***
3. ***Review current process for managing emails, possibly moving responsibility to the CSC***

Performance Management and Governance

- To answer all emails within 24 hours
- Measures related to the time spent dealing with emails, including waste due to lack of integration

NEW MEDIA STRATEGY (INCLUDING EMERGING SOCIAL MEDIA)

Use new media tactically to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase the speed of communication or reduce direct contact

Social media is used as a means of two-way communication with customers and the Council's approach is outlined in the social media strategy. The social networks [policy](#) outlines the benefits of using social media as an access channel, as well as guidelines for usage. To date, Twitter has been the most popular social media site used by customers to get in touch, with questions, reports and requests for service on the increase. Due to the nature of social networks a timely response is necessary so we will be expanding the number of individuals across the council who have access to our corporate Twitter account. This will include individuals within service areas as well as dedicated customer service advisers. We will monitor traffic and responses until April 2012 when we will update this strategy.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our New Media Provisions

- 1. Review the use of social networking sites to find opportunities for specific services***
- 2. Review the use of webchat facilities as an alternative to telephone, post & email channels***
- 3. Launch electronic petitions and monitor use***

Performance Management and Governance

- All new product launches should be subject to a full business case
- Services using social media will track effectiveness and outcomes of using them

MEDIA & MARKETING STRATEGY

Use media and marketing to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase the speed of communication or reduce direct contact

Media and Marketing are key channels to communicate with our customers. Customers need us to give them information to access services and channels that make the District a great place to live, work and visit. Historically the focus has been on communicating service information such as Royal Spa Centre programmes or Housing surgery times. We are now telling customers about the ways they can access services, such as Digital TV or the internet. We will monitor.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Media & Marketing Provisions

- 1. Re-launch the Comms & Marketing network to disseminate best practice, minimise information overload & reduce costs***
- 2. Target communications using customer data and monitor the success of any Media/marketing.***
- 3. Train staff who deal with the Press and customer channels such as Social Media***

Performance Management and Governance

- Services using media & marketing will track effectiveness and outcomes of using them
- All messages are written in Plain English no matter which channel is used

PAYMENT CHANNELS STRATEGY

Make our payment channels easy to access, easy to use and as efficient & integrated as possible

We have a number of payment channels available to customer including cash, cheques and electronic methods. The cheapest and fastest option for the Council is electronic payment. Many

customers prefer these methods so we will ensure customers are aware of all the options they can use, to make things as easy as possible. A number of services have been targeting moving customers to electronic channels, and this will continue. Where customers prefer other payment methods we will find the most efficient way to provide them.

The 3 Key Actions To Develop our Payment Channel Provisions

- 1. Continue to promote electronic payment options to customers***
- 2. Use Customer preferences to prioritise targeted payment Channel shift***
- 3. Review the payment channel contracts for opportunities to improve services and reduce costs***

Performance Management and Governance

- Regular monitoring of Costs and Customer demand levels of Payment Channels

Part 5 – Action Plan

As at October 2011:

REF	Action	Owner	Delivery Date
NC1	We will work with WCC & other partners to streamline services to eliminate multiple customer contacts with multiple organisations when registering a birth or death.	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Tell Us Once Project - Autumn 2011
NC2	To constantly improve the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone to prevent the need for a repeat call by reviewing areas with low FPOC results & working with service teams to change systems.	Contact Centre Manager	Underway & ongoing
NC3	We will review variances in demand for telephone & face to face channels & be proactive in managing variance	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
NC4	Work to improve communication and process failures to reduce waste (for example, letters sent that do not address customer questions, resulting in contacts)	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
CS1	Wherever possible, our staff will use the public website to transact in their day to day work to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Underway And Ongoing
CS2	Customer Services & Neighbourhood Services will work together to measure the success of newly- introduced online services.	Head of Neighbourhood Services, Head of Corporate & Community Services	December 2011
CS3	Review the most visited web pages and use this data to prioritise changes & potentially encourage channel shift.	Web Manager	Underway And Ongoing
CS4	We carry out face to face and remote user testing. Together with web analytics data we will use this to identify areas where customers are failing to complete tasks online	Web Manager	Underway And Ongoing
CS5	Review the Communications Strategy to ensure we are using and encouraging customers to use the most appropriate channels	Head of Corporate & Community Services	December 2011
DI1	Promote & Support the Race Online 2012 campaign, including encouraging staff to Give An Hour to help someone get confident online.	Head of Corporate & Community Services	June 2012
DI2	To participate in the government's "Digital Britain" programme of broadband expansion including bidding for funding with partners	Chief Executive/ ICT Manager	June 2011 onwards
DI3	To support our partners to provide public internet access, particularly for the jobless.	Enterprise Development Manager	Underway and Ongoing

AC1	Carry out an EIA on the channel mix and make reasonable adjustments as needed	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Underway and Ongoing
AC2	Participate in the government's "Digital Britain" programme of broadband expansion including bidding for funding with partners	Chief Executive/ ICT Manager	June 2011 onwards
AC3	Enhance the DigiTV service and promote it widely to customers	Web Manager	Underway till February 2012
T1	Review the collection of customer satisfaction data for the telephone service & build a business case for support if needed.	Contact Centre Manager	April 2012
T2	Integrate the CSC with the WCC CSC to build a more resilient service which can deliver more valuable services to customers	Contact Centre Manager	December 2011
T3	Work with service areas to improve right first time results for customers and reduce waiting times, prioritising areas of high demand and/or low FPOC results, measuring satisfaction across the system.	Contact Centre Manager	Ongoing
T4	Review the need for a CRM system & confirm requirements for a new system if needed.	Head of Corporate & Community Services	April 2012
T5	Review the practicalities of enabling the CSC to use other channels to answer demand-led queries (for example, using Twitter account or updating the Web)	Contact Centre Manager	April 2012
T6	Review technology & processes to enable CSC call listening for service areas	Contact Centre Manager	April 2012
M1	To provide access to council telephone based services using only 01- prefixes to ensure the minimum costs to mobile phone users, particularly on "pay as you go" tariffs	Contact Centre Manager	Implemented
M2	Review the Texting pilot, checking customer demand and feedback and any impact on other channels	Web Manager	April 2012
M3	Review mobile applications to see if there are any opportunities to improve information access for customers	Web Manager	Ongoing
W1	Optimise the website for mobile web access	Web Manager	Underway and Ongoing
W2	Review the CMS	Web Manager, ICT Manager	2013 TBC
W3	Ensure that business cases for improvements and additions reflect both increased public satisfaction & reduced contact centre effort in providing mediated access. Where this is the case, drive development and service shift to the website	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
W4	To ensure that all web content is written in plain English and in an accessible format	Web Manager	Underway and Ongoing
W5	Ensure all web content is relevant to the customer, comprehensive and always up to date	Web Manager, Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
W6	Explore the possibility of opening up our .gov content and applications to other	Web Manager	Underway and

	organisations e.g. by providing data in open format.		Ongoing
W7	Review use of Web self serve on CRM for non-personal tasks, in partnership with WDP	Head of Corporate & Community Services	April 2012
F1	Review the opportunities for customers to be gained from integrated staffing & implement changes needed	Head of Corporate & Community Services	April 2012
F2	Continue to work with Service areas to improve face to face services for customers (for example, Benefit staff on frontline), based on customer demand.	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
F3	Review the business case for moving the Leamington face to face service to a more suitable location, to improve access and make savings.	Head of Corporate & Community Services	June 2012
F4	Review the county-wide pilots of video links from satellite sites to call centre staff.	Contact Centre Manager	April 2012
F5	Equip OSS staff to promote web access and assist customers to self-serve	OSS Manager	April 2012
P1	To place more of our leaflets and information online – in an accessible online format -in order to minimise printing and reduce our environmental impact, and encourage staff to email information to customers rather than mailing	Document Management Centre Team Leader	Underway and Ongoing
P2	Increase use of emails for billing, by collecting customer email addresses and using them.	Interim Revenues & Benefits Manager	Underway and Ongoing
P3	Investigate having a corporate email/phone database to allow customer details to be used for cheaper and faster channels (email, text, etc) – including fit with CRM if appropriate	Head of Corporate & Community Services	April 2012
E1	To develop other channels in the ways detailed in this document to provide more attractive options to the email channel	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Underway and Ongoing
E2	To provide a wide range of integrated online forms, based on demand level, to minimise the amount of emails handled	ICT Manager	Underway and Ongoing
E3	Review current process for managing emails, with the possibility of moving to CSC (currently OSS team responsibility)	Contact Centre Manager	Underway and Ongoing
N1	Review the use of social networking sites, including customer demand and outcomes, to find opportunities for specific services	Web Manager	Apr 2012
N2	Review the use of webchat facilities as an alternative to telephone, post & email channels	Contact Centre Manager	Apr 2012
N3	Launch electronic petitions and monitor use	Committee Services team	Implemented & ongoing
N4	Increase the pool of trained staff able to respond to Twitter comments	Web Manager	Nov 2011
MM1	Re-launch the Comms & Marketing network to disseminate best practice, minimise information overload & reduce costs	Media Team Leader	Apr 2012
MM2	Target communications using customer data and monitor the success of any Media/marketing.	Media Team Leader	Apr 2012
MM3	Train staff who deal with the Press and customer channels such as Social Media	Media Team Leader	Apr 2012

MM4	Attend County-wide Communications meetings to keep up to date with public sector messages	Web Manager	Nov 2011
PC1	Continue to promote electronic payment options to customers	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
PC2	Use Customer preferences to prioritise targeted payment Channel shift, to minimise cash and cheque payments	Head of Corporate & Community Services	Ongoing
PC3	Review the payment channel contracts for opportunities to improve services and reduce costs	Document Management Centre Team Leader	2012/13
PC4	Pilot kiosk facilities in public buildings, to decrease cash payment usage and improve access to information	Document Management Centre Team Leader	June 2012
PC5	Review additional services & providers available – for example, text payments, configurable services & provide a business case for any pilots.	Document Management Centre Team Leader	June 2012