

# Customer Strategy



Putting customers at the heart of what we do

# Our Vision

At Epping Forest District Council we want **to hear our customers saying:**

You know me and **understand my needs**

I can **access your services** - how and when **I want**

You not only **respond to my needs** - but offer me **advice and support** on other services

When you get it wrong **you put it right** - acting upon my feedback

**I trust you** - you are **open, honest and transparent** at all times

You don't **stand still** - you **adapt** to my changing **needs**

Your staff really **put themselves in my shoes** - showing they **care** by everything they say and do



Putting customers at the **heart of what we do**



**Throughout  
2021**

**our aim is to speak  
to as many of you  
as possible**

We know the needs of our customers are constantly changing and our strategy is designed to put you at the heart of what we do, ensuring we really do understand your needs and can respond to them in the best way possible

## **We will keep listening to you and improving our services**

This pack provides an overview of what we are doing in the short term to improve our customer experience. In the longer term we really need, and would very much appreciate your involvement

We will be engaging with residents through customer satisfaction surveys, partner organisations and community groups, your valued feedback will help shape our strategy going forward.



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# Our Values & Behaviours

Everything we do is underpinned by our **values & behaviours:**



## Customer

We will put the customer at the heart of everything we do, providing services that are tailored to the differing needs of our communities



## Trust

We are open and honest with each other and our customers, treating everyone with respect and taking responsibility for our actions



## Performance

We take pride in our work and celebrate our achievements. We will learn from our mistakes and always do what we say we will



## One Team

Working together as One Council, supporting each other and our partners to achieve better results for everyone



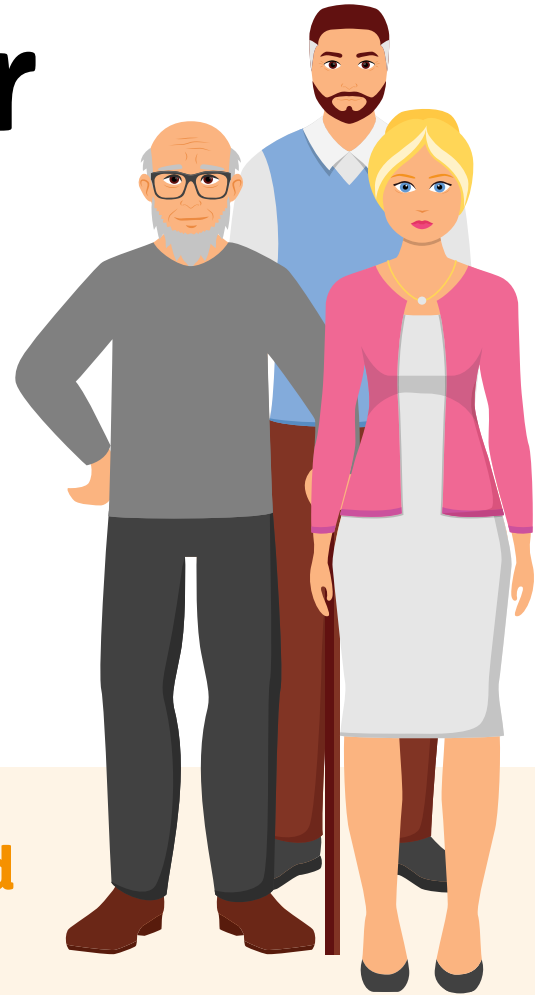
## Innovation

We will seek new ways of working - improving and changing to meet new challenges



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# Our Customer Promise



Regardless of how you interact with us **we promise to:**

## 1 ✓ Be customer focussed

- Actively listen to your needs
- Be polite and helpful - treating you fairly and with respect
- Make sure we clearly explain what will happen - who by and when
- Treat you equally in accordance with the Equality Act 2010

## 2 ✓ Get it right

- Provide you with the correct decision, information or payment
- Explain what you can do if the outcome is not as expected
- Resolve complaints in a timely manner and learn from mistakes
- Listen to your feedback when designing and reviewing our services



## 3 ✓ Be available when you need us

- Make our services easily accessible online for you to use at anytime
- Where appropriate provide a safe and confidential environment to meet us

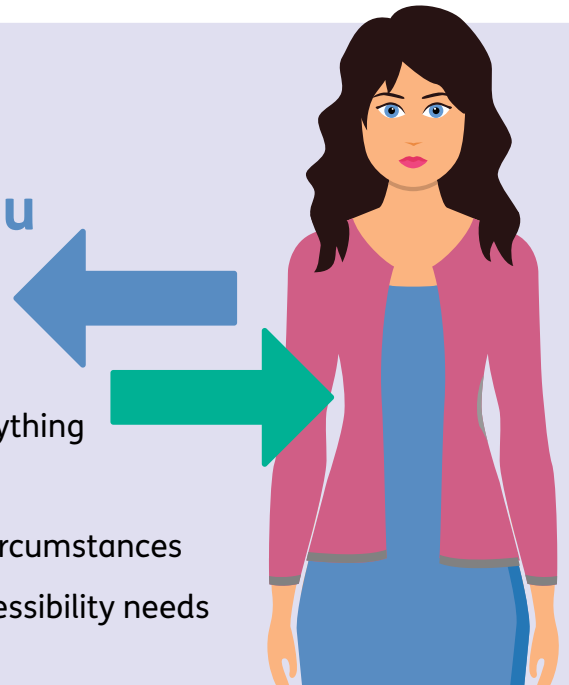


## 4 ✓ ★★★★★ Measure our service to you

- Provide you with the opportunity to leave customer feedback at every contact
- Monitor customer calls for quality and training purposes

## 5 ✓ In return we ask that you

- Treat all our staff with respect
- Provide us with the correct information
- Ask us to explain if you are unsure about anything
- Be on time for appointments
- Make us aware of any relevant changes in circumstances
- Inform us if you have any translation or accessibility needs



# Where to start

In developing our strategy we carried out lots of research on what customers want when interacting with a company - whether it's a local authority or private sector business - and the message is loud and clear

Customers want:

An organisation that's easy to deal with

Helpful staff

An easy to use website



With this in mind, we are focusing on three key areas:

**Fixing the basics**

– creating a strong internal platform, shining a spotlight on our internal operations

**A 'customer shoes' culture** –

ensuring all staff are putting themselves in your shoes at each interaction

**Embracing new technology**

– responding to your changing needs and making sure you can contact us how and when you want



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# Fixing the Basics

...you said, we did...

We are starting off by focusing on our internal operations. However good our processes or services are there is always room for improvement and your feedback is helping us understand what we need to do differently

**You told us you don't like being passed from pillar to post**

We appreciate how frustrating it is to not get the answers you need from the first person you speak to. We are addressing this as follows;

## 1 Single point of contact

We are moving all customer contact into one contact centre

As each area transitions over to our contact centre staff will undergo extensive training so that they have the knowledge to answer your queries

If your query is of a technical nature our customer advisors will ensure you are directed to the right person







## 2 Getting you to the right person first time

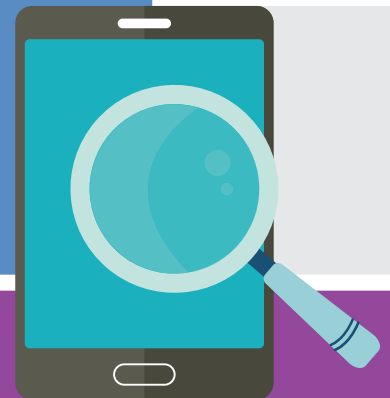
We have undertaken an internal re-structure with the focus on making us as efficient, effective and customer focused as possible – but sometimes it is not always easy for everyone to know ‘who does what’

All staff have access to an updated service/phone guide ensuring that if they do need to redirect you they can make contact with the right person

## 3 Giving our service levels a health check

We have high expectations of how our customers are served and want to make service levels consistent across all areas

With our new structure in place each team is conducting a review of service standards, establishing a baseline on current performance, helping us challenge ourselves on barriers and implementing action plans for areas of improvement



## 4 Getting to the root cause

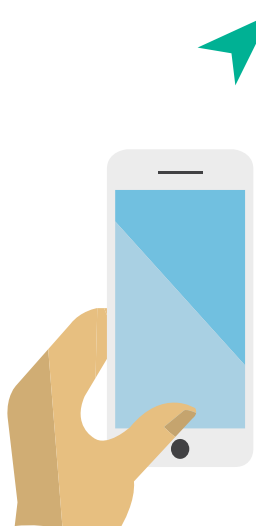
We have improved our analysis of the nature of your calls so that we can better understand the reasons why you call us. This helps us to understand any common trends or issues we need to pick up on



# When things go wrong

If we do get it wrong and you are unhappy with the service you have received from us, we have a robust complaints process in place

Complaints can easily be reported via our website under the Comments, Compliments and Complaints section at:



Comments, compliments and complaints - Epping Forest District Council

or by calling our **contact centre** on **01992 564000**

Either way you will receive an immediate acknowledgement

In line with our culture of continuous improvement we will always learn from our mistakes to avoid similar occurrences

Likewise, we love to hear from you if you have any general comments or in fact compliments – if we are doing something you like we want to understand how we can do more of the same. **Do let us know via the link on the left**



You told us that our website is frustrating to use – and we are listening to you!

We have a plan in place to improve it and will be asking for your feedback on the difference it makes to your online experience

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# Adopting a 'customer shoes' culture

We expect each and every one of our staff to put themselves in your shoes when making decisions, changes to processes or responding to your queries

If you receive a letter from us it should be **simple to understand** and if you call us we want you to feel listened to

Through high profile awareness campaigns and training **staff will understand** how it feels to be on the receiving end of our actions

This training will focus on **four key skills** – active listening, doing what we say we are going to do, being credible and reliable and turning situations around if things go wrong



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# It is not what we do but how we make you feel



This must be the case at every single interaction! We may not always be able to give you what you want but we will ensure we are always very clear, open, honest and transparent in our actions



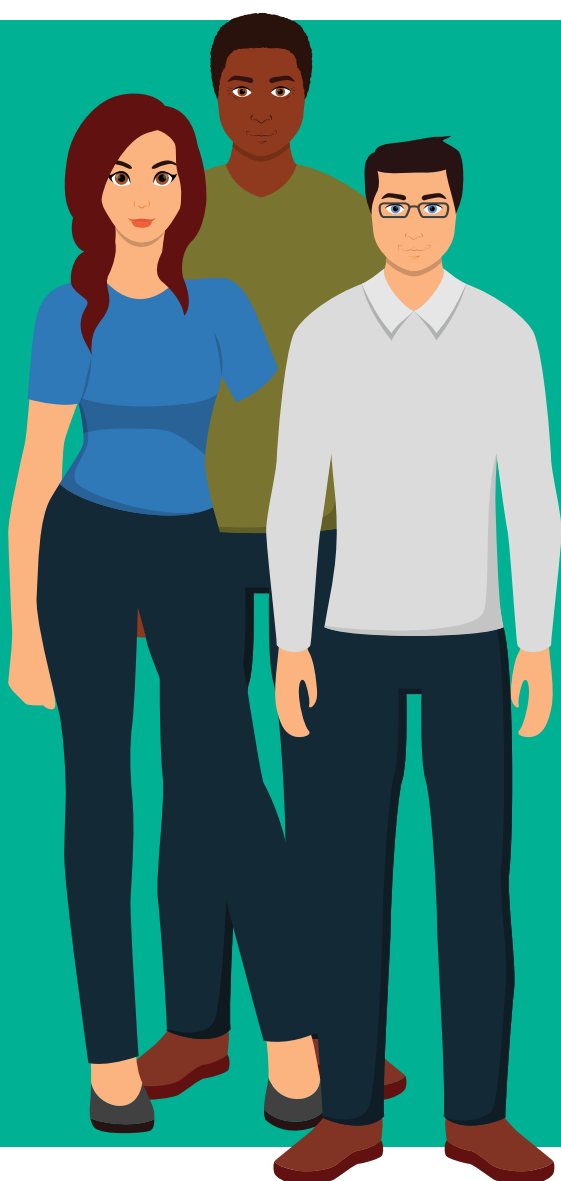
## Service Superstars

Our staff are key to our success and we would love you to tell us about those you feel have:

- Gone the extra mile to help you
- Resolved a query beyond expectations
- Anticipated your needs and responded to them

**We recognise those staff for their efforts and use them as role models for great service**

**Please tell us about them via the Comments, Compliments and Complaints link**




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# Embracing new technology

**We are again listening to what frustrates you and using new technology to address these frustrations**



## **You don't want to hold on the phone, waiting to be answered**

We try to answer your call as quickly as we can. We are exploring the possibilities of using technology called a 'chatbot' to intervene while you are holding on and offer you assistance. Should you wish to stay on the line to speak to an operator you can of course do so, but 'chatbot' may well be able to answer your query



## **Say it once**

If you are moving in or out of the district or need to report the death of a loved one there can be many different departments to contact. We appreciate what a busy time this will be for you and are introducing a 'say it once' process to capture the information which will be communicated to all relevant services

## **You shouldn't have to repeat yourself**

New technology will capture your contact history on one system. Whatever team you speak to will have access to the history of your contacts with us - removing the need for you to repeat yourself

## APPLY FOR IT

### Pay it, Report, it, Apply for it, Book it

As these are the most common reasons that customers contact us we are adding these four simple buttons to the home screen of our website to save you time and keep it simple

Postcode

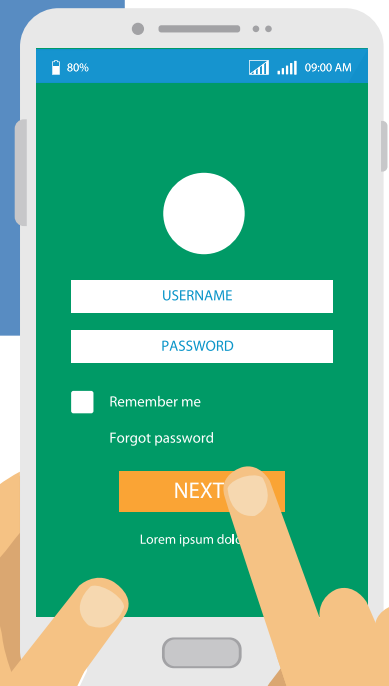
### 'My area'

As a resident of Epping Forest District we want to make it easier for you to access what's going on in your area. By entering your postcode you will be able to easily see information on your home and neighbourhood

### Personalising your service

You will be able to sign up to receive the information that matters most to you

The latest technology will help us in our ongoing journey to transform and improve our services to you



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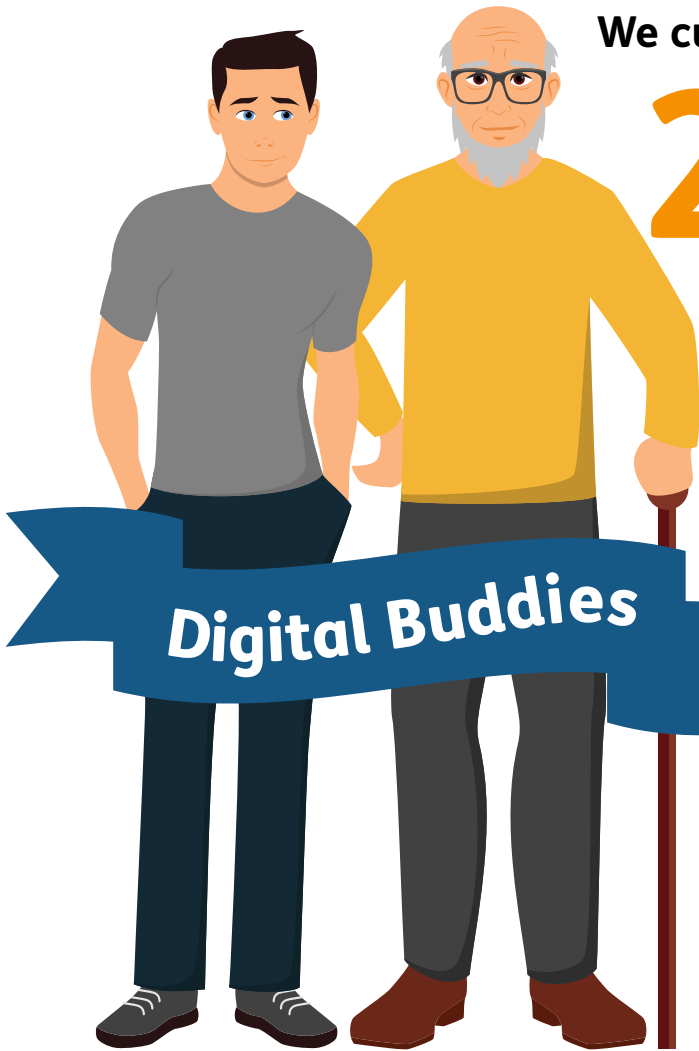
# Helping you get online



We currently have

# 21,000

residents who  
do not use  
social media



**Digital Buddies**

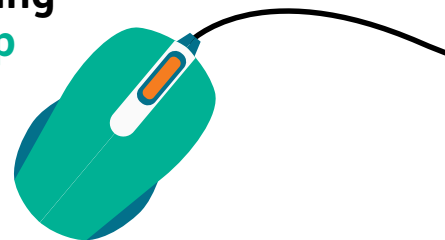
Everyone has a preference on how they communicate and we appreciate many may not wish to use social media

However, there is a world of information a click away should you wish to access it



Through our **Digital Inclusion** programme we are training staff to act as 'Digital Buddies' to help both colleagues and customers get online and understand how social media can help them in their everyday lives

From paying a bill online, applying for a job or looking for social activities in your area we are keen to help you get to grips with technology



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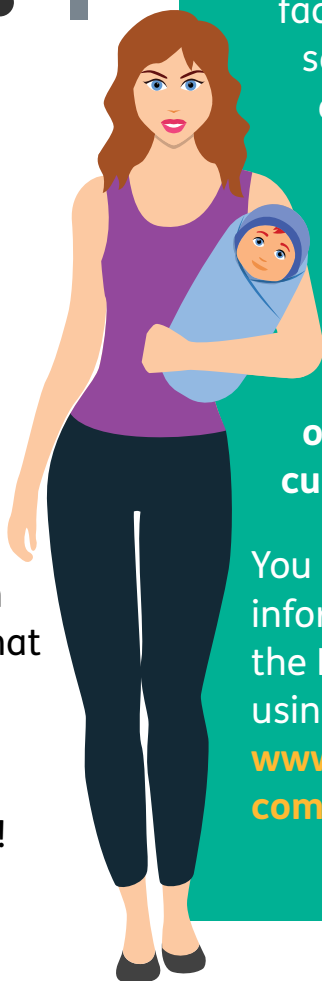
# Bringing our services to you



We want to be where you need us

## Our workforce is flexible and mobile

We are keen to understand more about what services you need in the community and at what locations. There is no reason why we cannot establish pop-up Council services and come to you!



## Sign-posting you to useful advice

Your health and wellbeing is a priority to us and our customer facing staff have access to a service called Frontline. This enables them to refer you to other services in the district which may be of help from a health and wellbeing perspective

**In addition, other organisations can refer customers to our services**

You can also self-refer or obtain information by logging onto the Frontline website yourself using the following link <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/community/frontline/>



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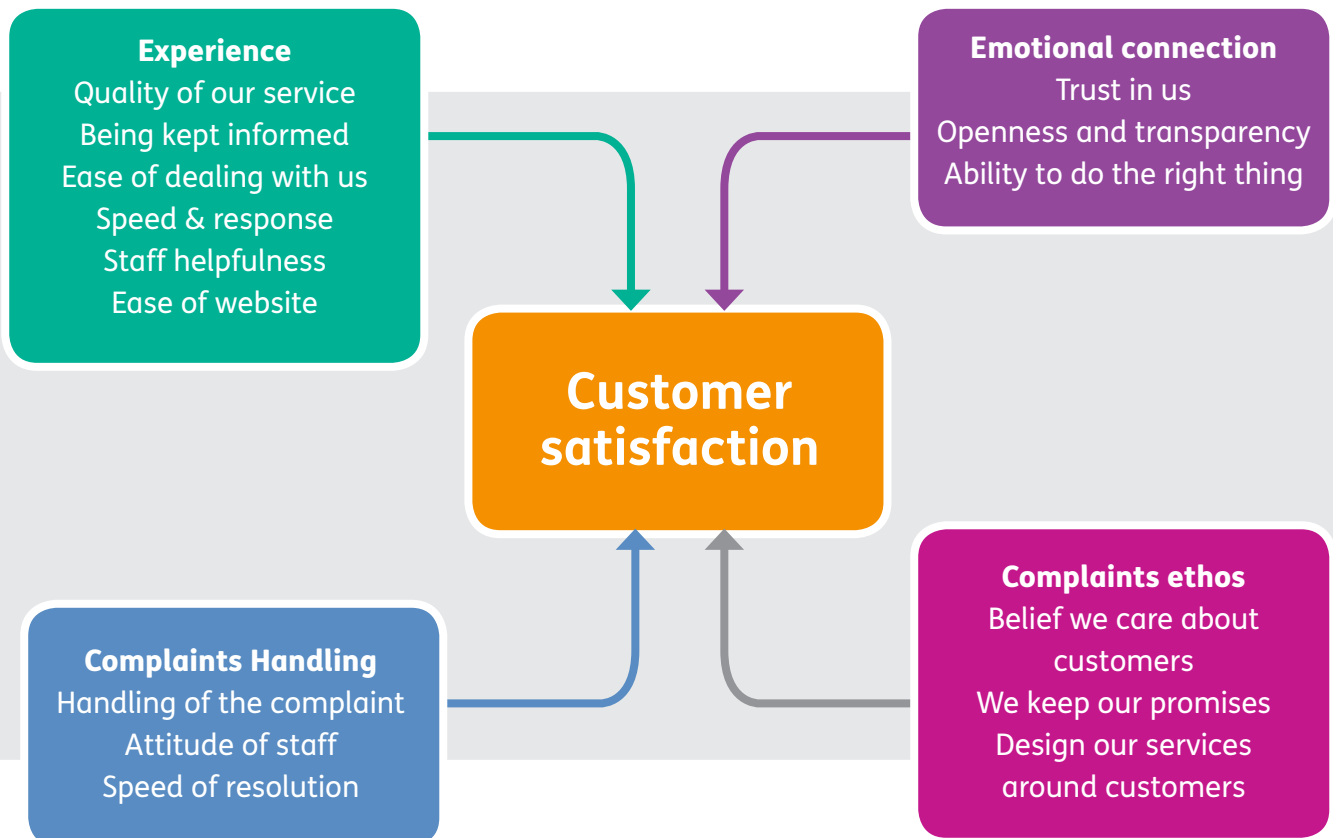


# Checking we're on the right track



Your satisfaction is important to us and we want to capture your feedback so that we know we are on the right track

When measuring your satisfaction with our service we will take into account your feedback on all of the following:



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# This is just the start!

**We need to evolve as your needs change. You have our commitment that everything we do will be based on your needs**

We appreciate we have many different customer groups who wish to interact with us in different ways, so if it's face-to-face we will look at how we can deliver more of our services

in the community or if it's online we will make it a simple smooth process

**In delivering our service plans you will be at the heart of them**

We welcome your feedback on our customer strategy via email to:

**[customerstrategy@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:customerstrategy@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)**



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