Dacorum Borough Council Customer Engagement Strategy [2022-2025]

V0.2

Document History

Version Control

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1	01/11/21	Charlotte Ellis (Ignite)	Initial draft
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V0.2	03/11/21	Linda Roberts	Sponsor	Dacorum

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1 Purpose of this strategy

1.1 Council priorities and the alignment of this strategy

The global coronavirus pandemic has forced us to change how we deliver services to our residents, businesses, and visitors. It triggered an inevitable change in customer demand, behaviours, and expectations where they had to access services in different ways. Our customers have become accustomed to these changes, and they have felt both the benefits and drawbacks from our adapted delivery.

As part of our post-covid reset, we need to ensure that we are building on foundations of our response to the pandemic: strengthening and maturing our relationships within communities and the voluntary sector, improving our digital offering, and providing services with finite resources. The lessons we have leant need to be shared and embedded across the whole council, which will help us identify the areas where improvement is needed to provide a consistent customer experience in line with our vision..

It is critical that during this reset we engage with our customers to review where we have not met customer expectations, where we may be excluding customers and where we have low areas of customer satisfaction. Customer service is not just about accessing services, digital service delivery and having a customer service centre: it is about embedding customer focus in everything we do and how we do it should be a priority for all of us.

To drive these behaviours and to support the vision in our corporate plan 2020-2025 *"Working in partnership to create a borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper",* we have developed a vision for our customers, which is:

> ***"To put the customer at the centre of our services in order to provide a positive and effective customer experience, and to empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services."***

Setting out our customer vision, principles, and approach to our customer engagement in this strategy will enable us to consistently design and deliver our services with the customer at the heart of everything that we do, whilst managing the ongoing financial pressures that local authorities face.

1.2 Goals of this strategy

Our goals are to:
- Put the customer at the centre of our services
- Provide a positive and effective customer experience.
- Empower our staff so they can deliver consistent and quality Council services
- Establish a corporate approach to customer research, customer feedback and continuous improvement
- Influence customer behaviour to encourage increased adoption of online and automated channels
- Embed customer focus in all roles, teams, and services, and manage ourselves against this

- Provide us with customer insight and increase intelligence-led decision making
- Reduce the cost of interactions and remove inefficiencies

Our goals will enable us to reach our vision and provide a clear roadmap for the customer strategy.

Industry accepted estimates on the cost of customer contact across channels, based on data collected from 200 councils for SOCITM's Customer Access Improvement Service briefing, show that typical costs are £8.62 per visit for face-to-face meetings; £2.83 per call by phone; and £0.15 per "visit" via a council website.

There is a corresponding trade-off with the level of reassurance provided to customers, as illustrated below. The principles established in this strategy will enable us to deliver improved customer experience that takes into consideration the different types of customers we have, the services that they are accessing and the appropriate range of channels we need to offer.
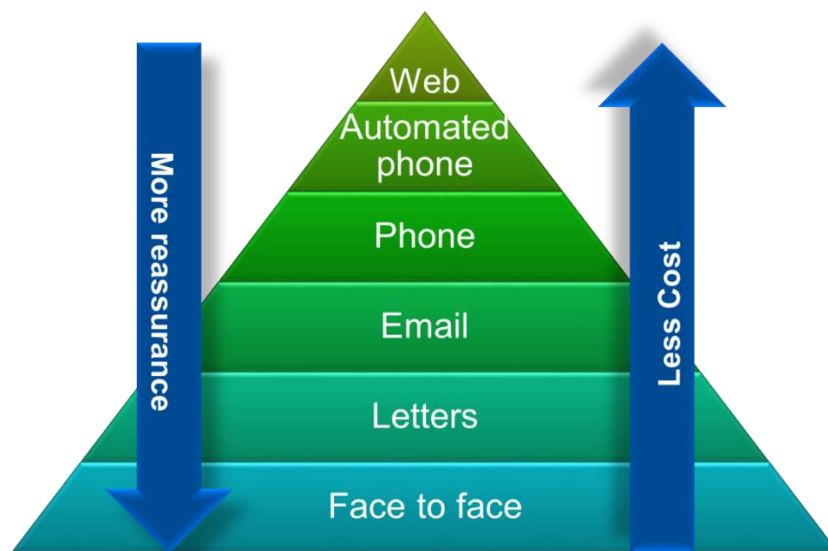
Figure 1: Cost vs reassurance by contact channel

In addition, efficiencies can be achieved by encouraging customers to adopt self-service channels and shaping how demand comes into us. They can be achieved through enabling enquiries and requests to be resolved as early as possible, meeting our aspiration 'one and done' by customer service teams and minimising the amount of contact going direct to staff working on cases. It is important that customers can contact officers who are handling work that is of a more complex or of long-lasting nature (e.g., an application that might take weeks to process) but wherever possible contact should be via self-service or triage channels.

1.3   Principles we will follow

Alongside the development of the customer vision, we have created 11 design principles, that can be aligned to 3 key themes; customer experience, channel shift and demand management, and ways of working (see Figure 2).

These design principles will force us to ensure that we strike the right balance between driving increased adoption of digital channels and providing proactive and preventative services to our customers with complex needs. They will become embedded in our approach to designing new services and improving existing services.

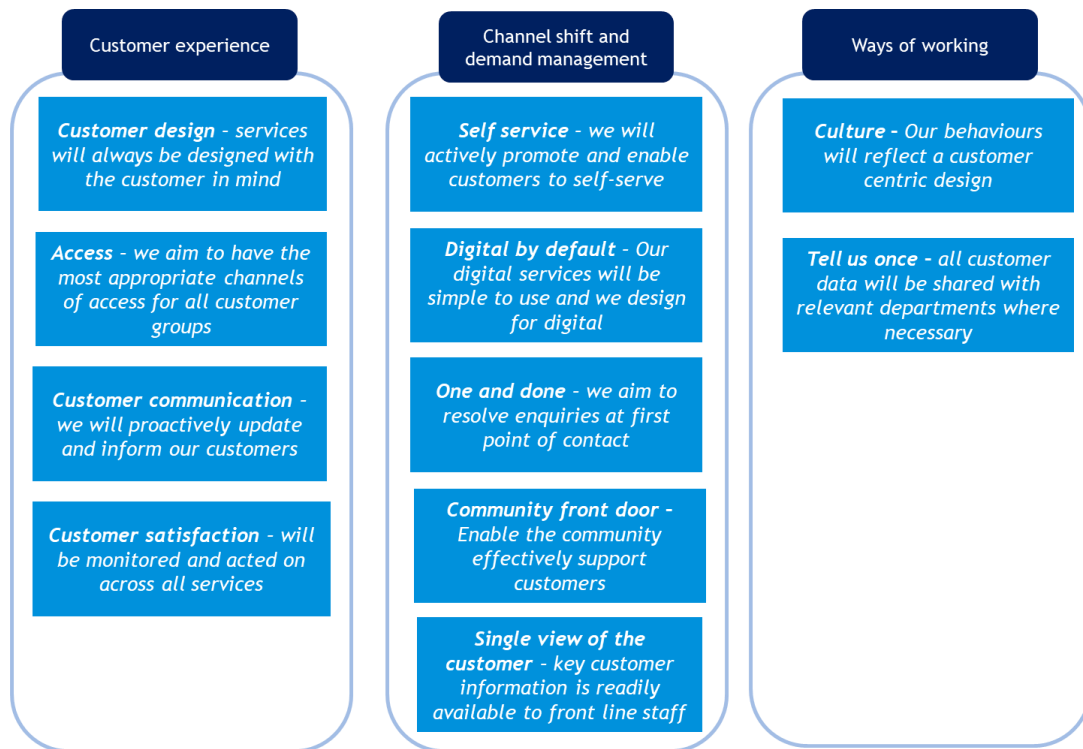| Customer experience	Channel shift and demand management	Ways of working
Customer design - services will always be designed with the customer in mind	**Self service** - we will actively promote and enable customers to self-serve	**Culture -** Our behaviours will reflect a customer centric design
Access - we aim to have the most appropriate channels of access for all customer groups	**Digital by default** - Our digital services will be simple to use and we design for digital	**Tell us once -** all customer data will be shared with relevant departments where necessary
Customer communication - we will proactively update and inform our customers	**One and done** - we aim to resolve enquiries at first point of contact	
Customer satisfaction - will be monitored and acted on across all services	**Community front door** – Enable the community effectively support customers	
	Single view of the customer - key customer information is readily available to front line staff	

Figure 2: Design principles by theme

1.4   Being data-driven

Many of the principles above depend upon us collecting, analysing, and making better use of, data. Our approach to this will need to focus on five important areas:

1. **Customer profile**: age, preference, ability to access services and other factors.
2. **Service metrics**: what services we provide, including volumes, when are we providing them, how are we providing them, satisfaction levels.
3. **Delivery channels**: the effectiveness of current delivery channels that are available to use, as well as those that may be available in future.
4. **Organisational ways of working**: the skills and knowledge required to deliver our vision and principles, understanding where processes and policies need to change to empower staff, ensuring continuous improvement through feedback and performance
5. **External factors**: we will work closely with partners to share information, where appropriate, to deliver a seamless customer experience and we will respond to changes in legislation and Government directives.

Our current data collection for customers is limited and we will need to start to build up data and feedback ensuring we are embedding it into the design of our services.

2 Context – Dacorum, the Council, and our demographic

2.1 National context

According to the Office for National Statistics[1], 96% of households now have internet access across Great Britain (see Figure 3 below). 100% of households with children, or 2 adults aged between 16 – 64 have access to the internet, and 95-97% of households with at least one adult between 16 – 64. For households that have a single adult at 65 years old or more the amount drops to 80%, but when another adult (ages 16 – 64) lives in these households, this rises to 94%.
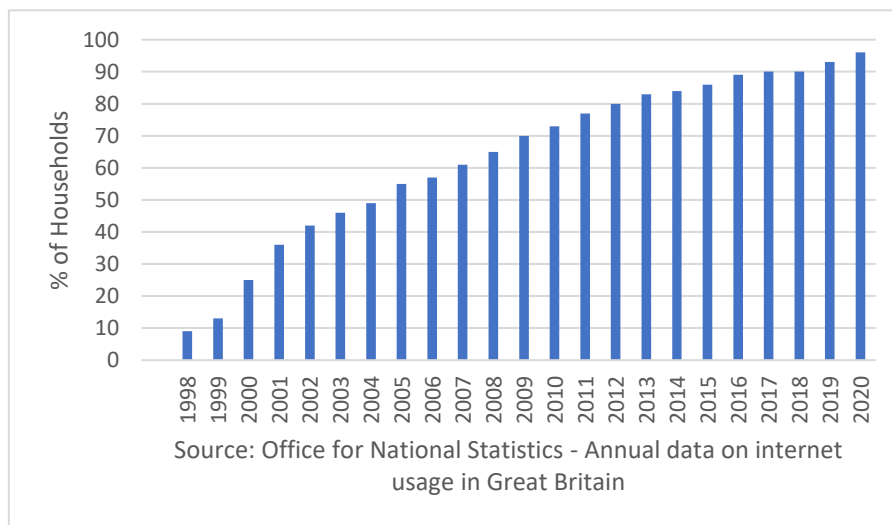

Source: Office for National Statistics - Annual data on internet usage in Great Britain

Figure 3: Households with internet access in Great Britain, 1998 to 2020

While 89% of adults used the internet daily in 2020, this percentage reduces significantly across age groups over 44 years old, 67% of adults aged 65 years and over, used the internet daily, while 18% had not used the internet in the last three months (see Figure 4). However, this is a large increase against 2019, when 61% of adults aged 65 years and over, used the internet daily and 24% had not used it in the last three months.

The statistics also indicate that 84% of adults who are defined as disabled in line with the Equality Act definition, use the internet daily, while 8% had not used it in the previous 3 months.

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https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020
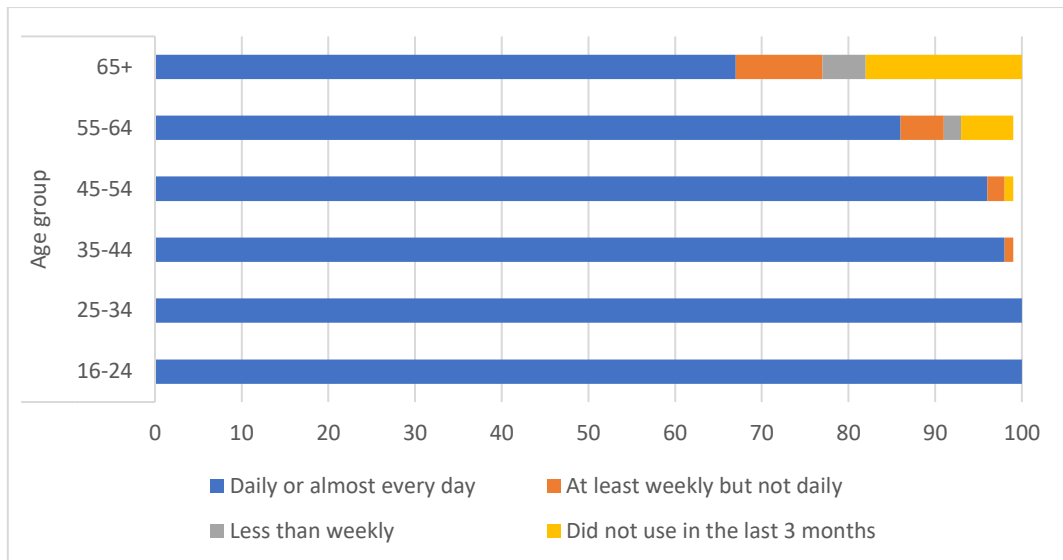
Figure 4: Internet use within the last three months, Great Britain, 2020

Since 2014, the ONS has been collecting information on the reasons why households use the internet to interact with public authorities or services. Between 2014 and 2020, there has been a 7% increase to 44% in people using the internet to obtain information about public authorities or services from websites. In the same timeframe, submitting online forms has increased by 5% to 37% and downloading official forms has dropped 3% to 26%. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of the age groups, and their reasons for interacting over 12 months.
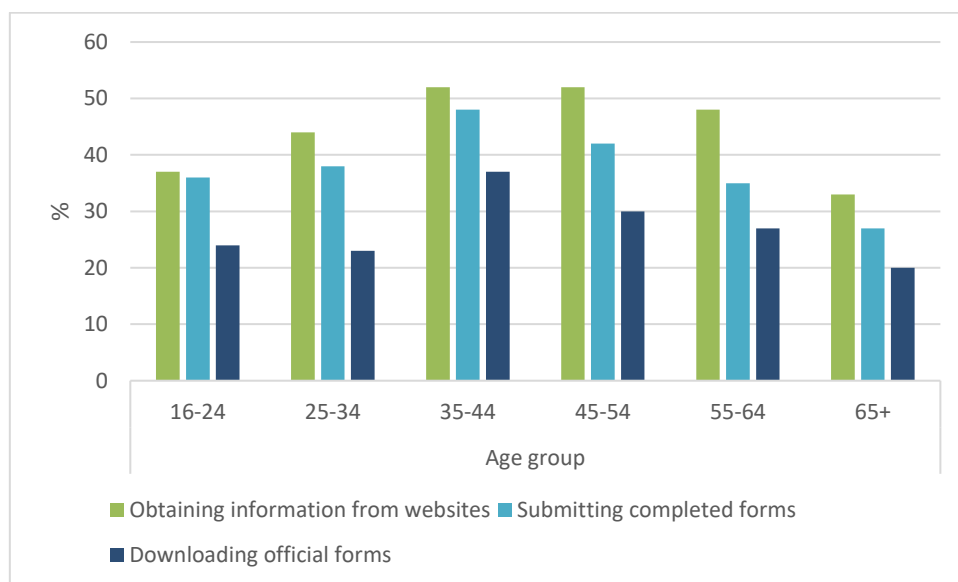
Figure 5: Reasons for interacting with public authorities or services using the internet, in the previous 12 months, Great Britain, 2020

Since 2009, the percentage of adults who use the internet daily has grown by 34 percentage points, to 89% in 2020. Mobile phones or smartphones are the most popular devices used to access the internet, but there is an emergence of devices that connect and exchange data with other devices and systems over the internet, the 'internet of things'. For example, 35%

of the population used a virtual assistant smart speaker or app to access the internet in the past three months of 2021.

In conclusion, the vast majority of the UK population now routinely uses the Internet to communicate, find information and transact. Although older adults are still least likely to use the Internet, this is changing more quickly than for any other part of the population. The internet of things is being used more frequently to help overcome barriers for the elderly and vulnerable in a range of sectors including, social care, health care and community. However, there is still a large proportion of people who do not use the internet to access information about public services and with the nature of the activities they are completing, they prefer to do it over the phone or in person. Therefore we can assume that a large proportion of simple local government transactions can take place on-line, but there is still a need to offer multiple channels but not to the same extent.

2.2   Local context – Dacorum Borough Council

Dacorum is an affluent and green borough with 50% of land being designated Green Belt[2]. The borough has a population of 154,763 which is projected to increase to 165,486 by the year 2043[3]. Over 70% of the population of Tring and Berkhamsted are in the 3 least deprived deciles of LSOAs in England for income[4].

Key facts and issues for the borough include:

- Hemel Hempstead, as the largest urban centre in the borough, is closer matched to England's average deprivation than Tring and Berkhamsted which show low levels of deprivation[5]
- Dacorum performs well above England's average deprivation metrics in Health Deprivation and Disability, Index of Multiple Deprivation, Employment and Living Environment[6]
- Dacorum underperforms England's average for Barriers to Housing and Services, with 65% of its population below the 50th percentile.[7]
- White ethnic groups account for 90.9% of the population. Asian ethnic groups account for 4.6% (Census 2011)[8]
- Above average weekly income £630 vs. national average of £587 in 2020[9]

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-green-belt-statistics-for-england-2019-to-2020

[3] Page 9 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[4] Page 6 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[5] Page 6 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[6] Page 6 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[7] Page 6 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[8] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/2011censuskeystatisticsforlocalauthoritiesinenglandandwales

[9] https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157223/report.aspx#tabempunemp

- Life expectancy is higher in Dacorum than in England & Wales for both men and women (81.11 vs 79.44 and 83.95 vs 83.11 respectively)[10]
- Dacorum, like the UK as a whole, has experienced a drop in wellbeing measures from 19/20 to 20/21 as a result of the pandemic; life satisfaction, feeling that life is worthwhile, and happiness have all seen drops[11]. Anxiety in Dacorum was rated 2.79 in 19/20 (vs 3.05 for the UK) and has grown at double the national trend to 3.28 (vs 3.31 in 20/21)[12].
- General low levels of homelessness, in 2019 10 single people slept rough in the borough, reducing to 7 during the 2020 pandemic[13]
- Above average economically active population vs England average (83.7% vs 79.5%)[14]
- Low levels of unemployment, below the average for England (3.5% vs 4.8%)[15]
- 56.7% of residents have a level of qualification equivalent to NVQ3 or above[16]; the average for England is 57.1%

In conclusion, Dacorum has an increasing population which means we are likely to see increases in demand for council services with decreasing per head funding. The population is well-educated, economically active, with a high proportion of residents with English as their first language. The majority of people of Dacorum are well placed to access services online, with the skills to do so. However, there is a small proportion of the population for whom accessing services online may not be possible or suitable.

2.3   Organisation context – the council and our customers

2.3.1   Customer demand

Like all councils, the Council has seen significant reductions in government funding over the past 10 years. According to National Audit Office figures[17], the council's spending power reduced by 23.9% between 2010-11 and 2017-2018, a slightly lower reduction than the average for district and borough councils of 30.1%. New analysis shows that local services face a funding gap of £7.8 billion by 2025[18]. In addition to the funding pressures, the coronavirus pandemic has had a phenomenal impact on our customers, their expectations of us and how we deliver our services. We need to understand the demand that we receive, who from and through which channels.

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[10] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/datasets/lifeexpectancyestimatesallagesuk

[11] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnationalwellbeing/april2020tomarch2021

[12] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnationalwellbeing/april2020tomarch2021

[13] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020

[14] Page 13 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[15] Page 13 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[16] Page 8 - Dacorum Borough Council Data Dashboard

[17] https://www.nao.org.uk/highlights/financial-sustainability-of-local-authorities-2018-visualisation/

[18] https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.40_01_Finance%20publication_WEB_0.pdf (page 7)

'Customer' means any user of our services, including residents, non-resident service users, businesses, and parish councils. Our customers have many reasons to contact us, which we can categorise as:

- Finding information and guidance: e.g., web pages, promotional information, community campaigns
- Requesting a service: e.g., planning enforcement, registering for council tax, registering a birth, paying a bill, obtaining advice
- Getting help with vulnerable circumstances: e.g., homelessness, rent arrears, council tax discounts or exemptions
- Having their say: e.g., public consultations, making complaints
- Providing service updates: e.g., a contractor providing an update on a gas service they've completed on a council asset, referrals from partners

We recognise that each of these contact types will come through to us across the different channels we offer. As shown in Figure 1, each of our channels has a cost implication and we need to consider each of our contact types, and which channels we are shifting customers towards. The opportunities to shift customers of the contact types to more cost-effective online solutions will vary due to the type of transaction, the amount of risk involved, the comfort with technology and the intricacy of the query. This is visualised for the different contact types in Figure 6 below.

For example, a customer who needs to get help with vulnerable circumstances will most likely either call us, or 'walk in' and meet with us face to face. While this is a more expensive type of contact, we must balance the risk, the complexity of needs and the assurance the customer needs to deliver the right outcomes. This would be different to a customer who wants to find out what they need to provide for a licensing application. In this example, we would want to shift this customer to self-service using our website, as this contact type involves less risk, is less complicated and less assurance is required.

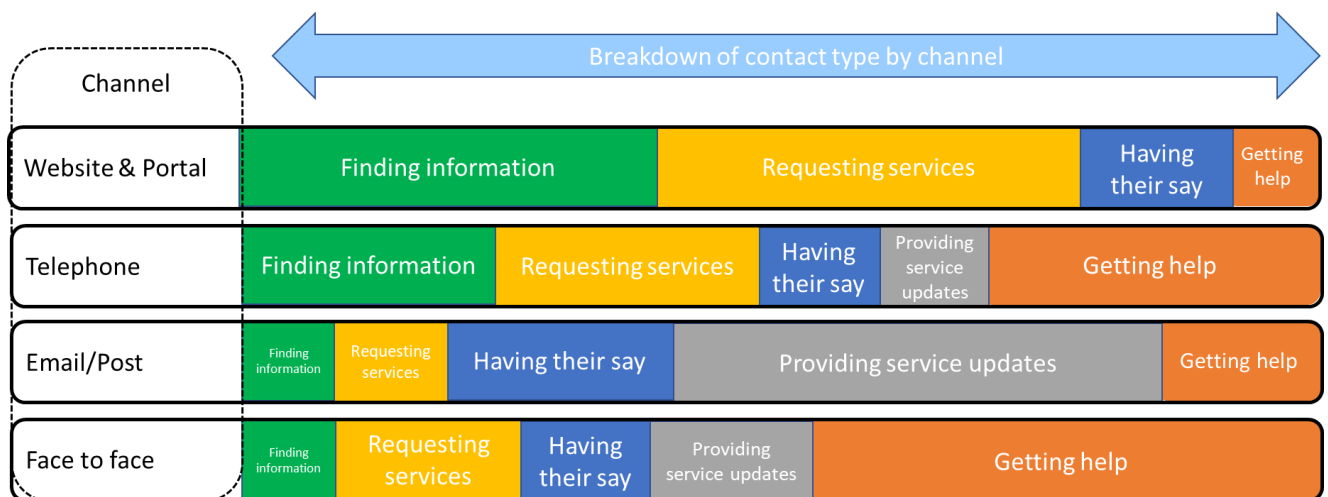**Figure 6: Visualisation of contact type by channel**

We define online services as services that can be managed digitally from start to finish, for example the customer completing an online form, which automatically creates a case in council systems using the data provided for them, and the customer tracking their case online to completion. For this reason, we do not consider PDF application forms or online

forms that generate emails to be true online services. **We will need to create the right mix of service channels, for each type of contact and for each type of customer to maximise the customer experience and efficiency opportunity and shift from our current state of high volume pdf.**

2.3.2 Current performance

Figure 7 below shows the current split of customer contacts by channel between 1st September 2020 and 31st August 2021. The proportional split indicates that across this 12-month period, interactions are most commonly made via telephone calls or online forms.
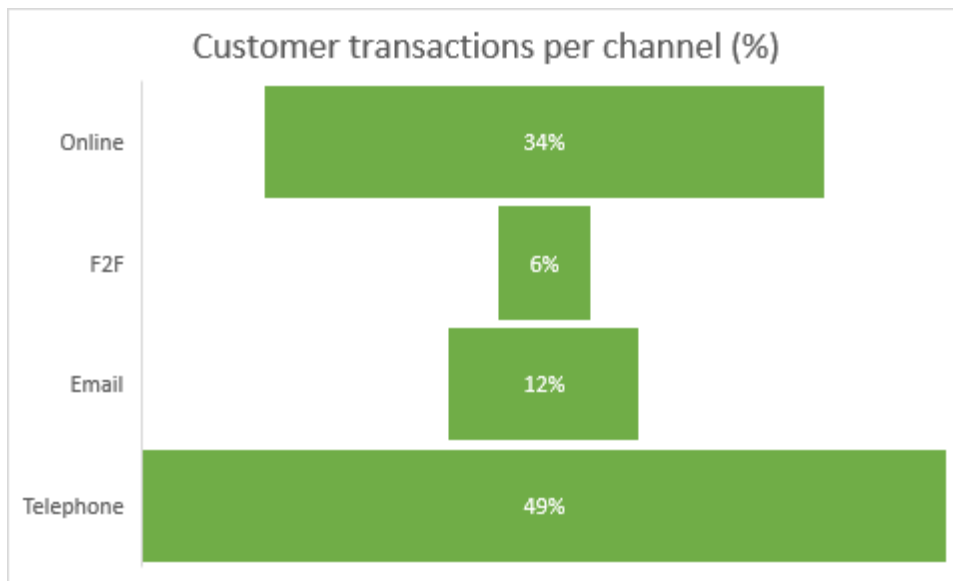

Figure 7: Customer transactions by channel September 2020 – August 2021

However, it is important to note that if we remove online payment transactions from the online total, the percentages per channel shift significantly (see Figure 8). So there is significant opportunity for us to enable a channel shift to more online transactions through this strategy.
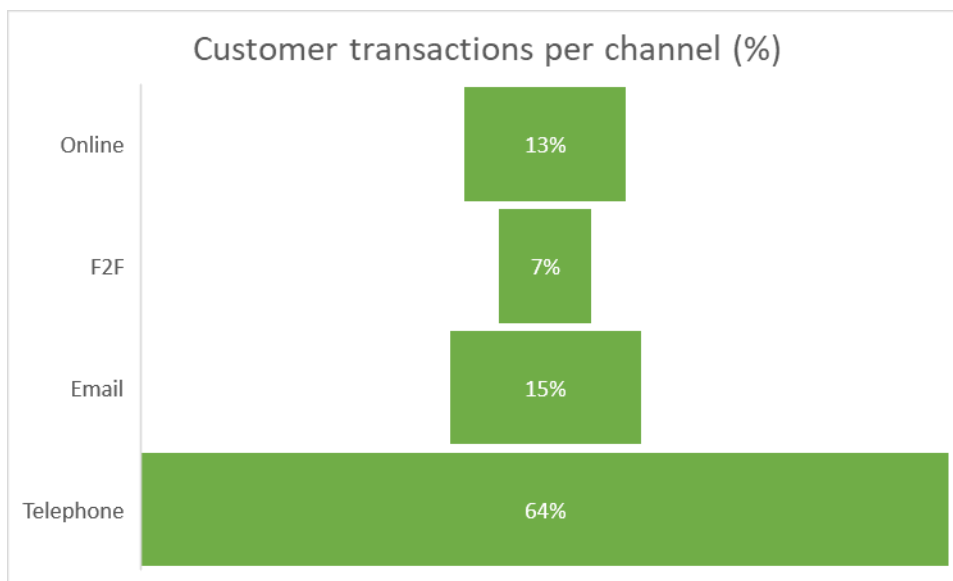
Figure 8: Customer transactions by channel (without payments) September 2020 - August 2020

Telephone

We received 255,998 calls into the Council in the period surveyed, which includes calls that had to be re-directed to officers or departments outside of the organisation. In February 2021 we established a new coding structure to categorise our calls. It is important to recognise that 22% of calls have not been allocated a category at all, and some are categorised as 'avoidable' (1%) or 'unavoidable' (7%) but do not detail the topic of the call. However, using these categories we know that the highest volume calls relate to waste (14%), revenues and benefits (14%), payments (10%) and services we do not provide (8%).
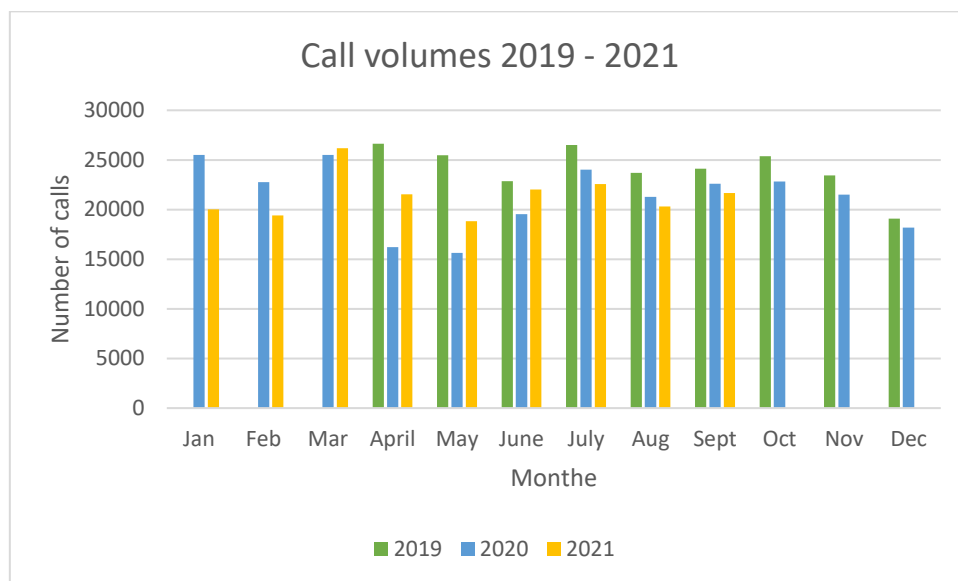
Figure 9: Call volumes by month between 2019 to 2021

When we compare our current levels of calls to pre-pandemic volumes (Figure 9) we can see that there has been a decrease in volume per month. However, the large decrease in calls seen during the first lockdown period of April – June 2020 has not been maintained.

We currently monitor a small range of metrics that can tell us about the experience our customers have when they are in a queue waiting for their call to be answered. We know that on average:

- 84% of calls are answered within 3m 10s
- 8.5% of calls are abandoned by the customer, waiting no longer than 1m 56s before doing so
- 7.4% of calls are re-directed to other organisations
- 95% of requested call backs are completed, while 5% are rejected

While we have the data for this aspect of performance, we do not have any customer satisfaction or feedback built into our processes and systems. We need to establish what is important to measure, what data we will use to measure it and how we will address performance issues when we review the data. Example metrics are provided in 'Section 5: How will we measure our progress?'

We have a higher-than-average volume of calls for a council of our size, which indicates that we have not yet maximised the adoption of online transactions.

Online

We received 170,447 transactions via the online forms, on our website of which 126,495 were for online payments. We also received 5,549 transactions via the Direct Debit portal, and 1,977 planning applications via the national Planning Portal.
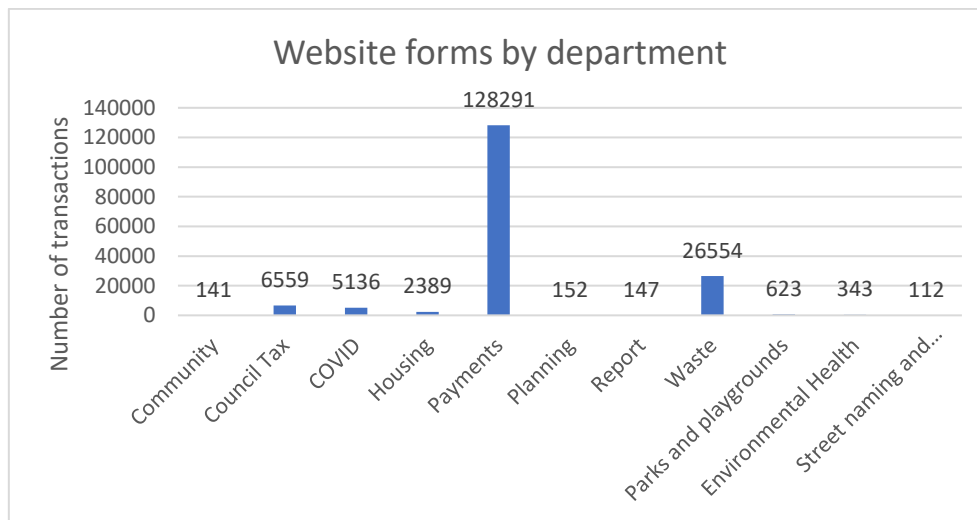
Figure 10: Breakdown of online form submissions Sept 2020 - Aug 2021

Online payments are by far the most popular request to complete via our website, followed by waste requests and reports. Whilst customers are required to provide their account numbers or reference numbers to make payments, they are not required to log in to complete these transactions, making them quick and easy for our customers.

The council currently has 7,800 customers signed up for an online account on MyDacorum, which is equal to 5% of our population. There are some requests or services that customers are required to register for an account to complete, but due to our lengthy authentication process we offer many services without this restriction to increase the likelihood of an online transaction. In addition, there is a separate portal for our housing tenants called MyHousing, which has 2317 accounts, of which 164 have logged in during 2021. This constitutes 23% of our housing tenants with an account, but only 2% are actively using them.

In addition to requesting services via online forms or portals, our customers can engage with us online to share their views and feedback. The 'public access' portal for planning enables customers to make comments during the consultation period of any planning application, which integrate automatically into the back-office system for checking before we publish. Of the 6,979 total comments received during the surveyed period, we received 80% of comments from the public, and 22% from consultees through the online portal.

Powerful customer insight can be provided by the data that our website gives us which can support the analysis of trends in customer behaviour. We can draw hypotheses about our customers, their engagement with the digital services we provide and the impact this is having before we undertake research with customers to validate our assumptions.

We can review and analyse:

- Our most viewed pages – excluding the home page these are below:
    1. Council Payments Portal – 294,976 unique views
    2. My Bin Collections – 275,479 unique views
    3. Search Planning Applications – 150,640 unique views
- What our customers search for most, which currently matches the highest viewed pages
- The average amount of time a customer spends on any webpage; do they leave straightaway or stay for longer?
    1. Council Payments Portal – Average time spent on page is 28 seconds
    2. My Bin Collections - Average time spent on the page is 33 seconds
    3. Search Planning Applications – Average time spent on the page is 3 minutes 18 seconds
- Behavioural heat-maps; where customers focus their time and navigate across the page

We need to take targeted actions to increase the adoption of online channels by our digitally enabled population. Using the business intelligence data that we have available to us will enable us to propose journeys for improvement, undertake customer research to understand and validate our assumptions, and create true customer-driven solutions. We want to ensure that we have created consistent customer journeys across all ou   r portal, website, and third-party system forms, delivering quality and value for money.

Email

Over the surveyed period we received over 60,000 emails, however we believe that the true figure is much higher. The data we currently hold is constrained to 12 group email inboxes, and we know that we have at least 109 because these are published on our website. The email addresses with the most appearances on our website are licensing@dacorum.gov.uk and ecp@dacorum.gov.uk with 26 and 25 appearances respectively. We anticipate that the volume into these inboxes is higher than most, but we do not have the data to validate this assumption. To truly understand the demand through this channel and the actions we need to take, we need to re-baseline the email volumes with all the group inbox data.

Emails are nearly as inefficient as receiving paper, as the data is unstructured, the onus is on the customer to give us all the information we need, and the data still needs to be re-keyed into other systems - work that could be avoided. The visibility of emails provides a challenge for performance management; it is not easy to see who is working on which cases for which customers, to re-allocate work among teams during operational peaks and troughs, use data intelligence to continuously improve or manage response times against service level agreements and key performance indicators. It is critical that we focus on how we shift customers away from this channel to structured, cheaper channels that provide us with better business intelligence data.

Face-to-face

Between 1st February 2019 and 31st January 2020, we received 29,727 visits across the three locations of our Customer Service Centres, which includes appointments and walk-ins. The period we surveyed for all other channels has not been used for face-to-face

transactions due to the required closure periods during the pandemic. We would seek to re-baseline once our offices have remained open without disruption for a minimum of 12 months.

In analysing the data from the pre-pandemic period, we can identify key trends that we want to review when we re-baseline. Table 1 shows each location, how many people visited and what they visited for. We can see that the same types of enquiries are among the top five in each location, and we would want to monitor if this has changed since the pandemic. If it hasn't changed, these top enquiries indicates where there could be opportunities to introduce changes to our customer journeys that means people do not have to visit us for their request to be completed.

Location	Total visits	Most popular reasons for visit
Berkhamstead	2,903	1. Payments 2. 'Other enquiry' 3. Sack sales 4. Supply evidence (benefits) 5. Housing register enquiry
Hemel	24,153	1. Supply evidence (benefits) 2. Housing register enquiry 3. Bill enquiry (council tax) 4. Other enquiry (benefits) 5. New claim (benefits)
Tring	2,671	1. Payments 2. Sack sales 3. 'Other enquiry' 4. Supply evidence (benefits) 5. Waste

Table 1: Customer Services Centre volumes

Face to face is the most expensive customer channel and it is difficult to plan for influxes of customers through the front door. It can also be the least convenient for some of our customers, as they might need to travel a long distance to their nearest customer services centre, take time off work to travel, and pay for public transport or parking. When we have the latest, stable, baseline data we can review which services could, and should, be better delivered without the need to visit us face to face.

Incoming documents (post or scanned)

We do not currently measure the volumes of incoming documents that we receive by post, that are required to be digitally scanned and indexed. If we had this data, we could understand the extent to which we have already made the move away from traditional paper-based methods of interaction.

In conclusion, despite the increasing demands on our services, and a local population well-equipped to do business with us online, a significant proportion of our customers engage with us through our telephone channel. We do not have our structures, culture, processes, and technologies aligned to a corporate approach that enables us to shift the balance of demand to where we want it to be to deliver our vision.

3 Who are our customers?

3.1 Our approach

We want to build a rich understanding of the different customers that the Council serves and considering all those who engage with us and how they need to be engaged with. Defining these customer groups is important to provide a framework of principles and personas that can be used throughout the organisation when designing new or improving existing customer journeys to enable our customer vision.

The definitions below have been drafted to illustrate the different types of customers, and how our design principles can be applied to each type. These types will need to be validated through customer research and engagement.

3.2 Our definitions

Standard customers- Residents, or visitors who contact us with everyday enquiries and requests, or who contact us to pay for a service. This could be something they must pay, such as Council Tax or social housing rent, or something they choose to pay for, such as leisure centre memberships.

Complex need customers - Residents who contact us because they have complex needs that they need support with. These needs could be medical, financial and/or circumstantial (e.g., domestic abuse, being evicted).

Business customers – Individuals or organisations which deliver their services within the district and contact us with enquiries and requests relating to the provision of these e.g., food businesses, taxi drivers. Individuals providing their services to support residents or businesses in the district and contact us in relation to their specific needs e.g., planning agents, Citizens Advice Bureau.

Internal customers - Individuals who work at Dacorum Borough Council and elected members who represent the electorate and interact with multiple services.

Partners - Organisations or people who contact us in relation to our residents, businesses, and district, such as DLUHC, Citizen's Advice Bureau, DWP. Organisations which provide leisure and culture services and contact us with enquiries and requests relating to the provision of these.

We recognise that there will be cross over between our customer types but find that people or organisations predominantly contact us in one capacity over another. There is an exception to this rule which is a 'high dependency customer' which is explained below.

High dependency customers – Any of our customer types who either require more support and reassurance during their interactions with us, or people who refuse to subscribe and interact with us via our preferred channels. They could also be people who are known to us and prefer to interact with us verbally (via telephone or in person) for a multitude of reasons such as loneliness, trustworthiness, or to be vexatious.

3.3   How will we use the Customer Types?

In addition to the design principles, we can have a set of principles that standardises how we engage with different groups of customers, providing them with the right mix of channels for each type of contact, to maximise the customer experience and efficiency opportunity.

Customer Type	What is the preferred channel for engagement?	Most common reasons to contact us	Design principles
All			• Services will always be designed with the customer in mind • Have the most appropriate channels of access for all customer groups • Our behaviours will reflect a customer centric design • Customer satisfaction will be monitored and acted on across all services
Standard **Business** **Internal**	Online	• Requesting a service • Finding information and guidance	• Resolve enquiries at first point of contact • We will proactively update and inform our customers • Our digital services will be simple to use, and we design for digital • We will actively promote and enable customers to self-serve • Key customer information is readily available to front line staff
Complex needs	Whichever delivers the outcome	• Getting help with vulnerable circumstances	• Enable the community effectively support customers • Our digital services will be simple to use, and we design for digital • All customer data will be shared with relevant departments where necessary
Partners		• Requesting a service • Getting help with vulnerable circumstances	
High dependency	Online	• Requesting a service • Finding information and guidance	• We will actively promote and enable customers to self-serve • Enable the community effectively support customers • We will proactively update and inform our customers • Key customer information is readily available to front line staff

Table 2: Design principles, preferred channel and contact reasons per customer type

We will use these types and principles to create our library of customer personas. Personas are a powerful tool that we can use to consider the impact our processes have on our

customers' lives and how we make them feel, instead of focusing on why we do the process that way for our internal purposes. They make us reassess the way we've always delivered services versus what different customer types expect, want, or need. Developing a set of customer personas answers the question 'Who are we designing this for?' but we must get real customer feedback to truly challenge our assumptions and be truly customer driven.

During service improvement, staff would select a set of personas which are the most akin to the customer types they serve. We would move through the steps of the journey from the perspective of each persona, from the moment they have contact with us through to the resolution of their case. We would use customer research findings to highlight pain points for customers, suggested improvement opportunities, and test newly developed solutions.

4 What are our core customer journeys?

4.1   Customer Journey Definitions

Customer journeys are a visual representation of a customer's experience, from the moment they have contact with us. Mapping a customer journey enables us to put ourselves in the shoes of the customer and see things from their perspective.

We will develop corporate customer journeys for the organisation that are aligned to our **Error! Reference source not found.**tiers, customer types and design principles. The benefits of developing these corporate customer journeys are:

- Creating a consistent experience for customers who interact with us
- Assessing the way, we deliver now against our ideal journey and identifying the gaps
- Setting expectations about the way we want both external and internal customers to interact with us
- Identifying where we need to make key decisions to bring consistency across all services

4.2   Tier Specific Customer Journeys and Principles

Each customer journey would have a set of core activities across the top which represent key touch points within the customer experience as they interact with us. Down the left-hand side there are information headings which force us to consider both the customer and council viewpoint across various factors.

Taking this approach enables us to review and improve the customer experience in a consistent, structured manner. An example tier 0 self-service customer journey, which is a completely self-serve interaction for a 'standard' customer, is shown in Figure 11 below. We can use these core customer journeys to hold ourselves accountable to the corporate principles of customer engagement, while we re-design processes and systems. We will use customer research to validate the 'moments of truth' and how successful our current service offer is at delivering the ideal customer journey.

Using the example below, we will develop our own core customer journeys in more detail with input from teams and roles across the council. Once developed, these core journeys would require some key organisational decisions and principles to be agreed, to enable these to be implemented as part of a transformation project.

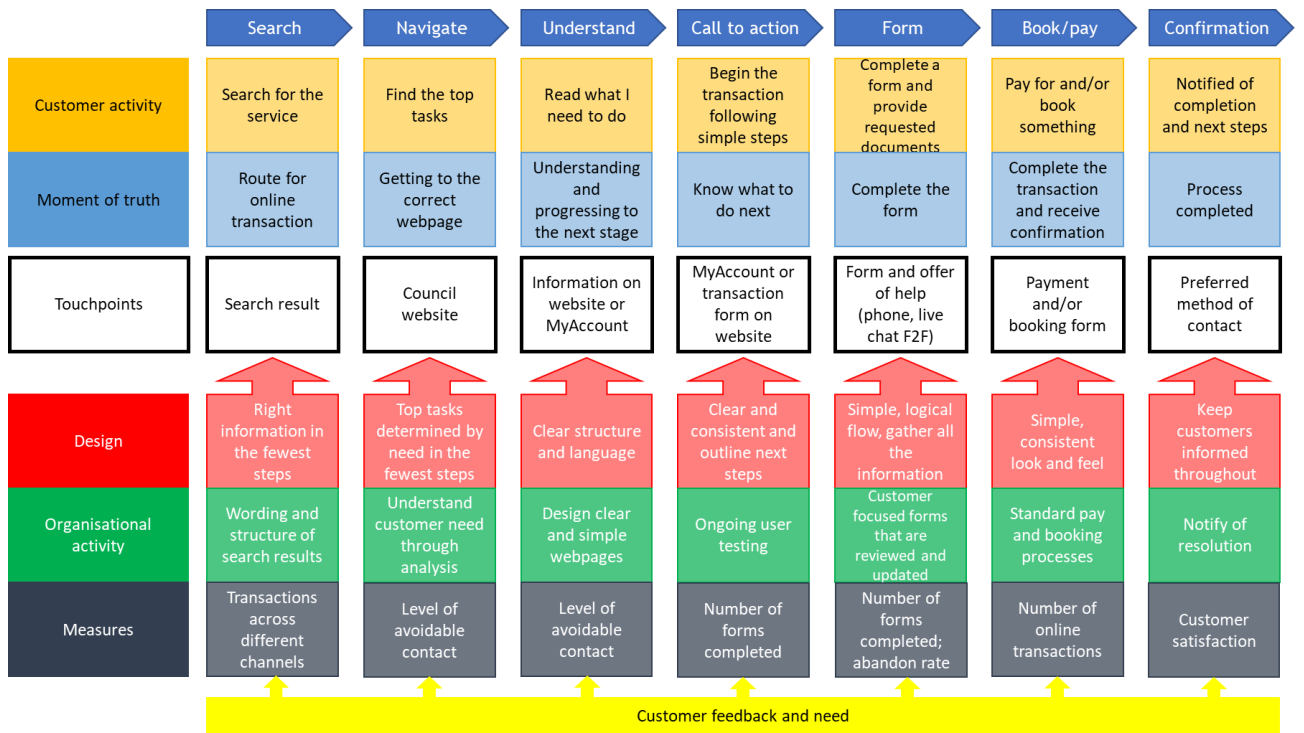|	Search	Navigate	Understand	Call to action	Form	Book/pay	Confirmation
Customer activity	Search for the service	Find the top tasks	Read what I need to do	Begin the transaction following simple steps	Complete a form and provide requested documents	Pay for and/or book something	Notified of completion and next steps
Moment of truth	Route for online transaction	Getting to the correct webpage	Understanding and progressing to the next stage	Know what to do next	Complete the form	Complete the transaction and receive confirmation	Process completed
Touchpoints	Search result	Council website	Information on website or MyAccount	MyAccount or transaction form on website	Form and offer of help (phone, live chat F2F)	Payment and/or booking form	Preferred method of contact
Design	Right information in the fewest steps	Top tasks determined by need in the fewest steps	Clear structure and language	Clear and consistent and outline next steps	Simple, logical flow, gather all the information	Simple, consistent look and feel	Keep customers informed throughout
Organisational activity	Wording and structure of search results	Understand customer need through analysis	Design clear and simple webpages	Ongoing user testing	Customer focused forms that are reviewed and updated	Standard pay and booking processes	Notify of resolution
Measures	Transactions across different channels	Level of avoidable contact	Level of avoidable contact	Number of forms completed	Number of forms completed; abandon rate	Number of online transactions	Customer satisfaction

Customer feedback and need

Figure 11: Tier 0 Standard Customers Example

5 How will we measure our progress?

To achieve the maximum impact, we need to ensure that our measurements are directly related to our goals and the impact we are trying to achieve.
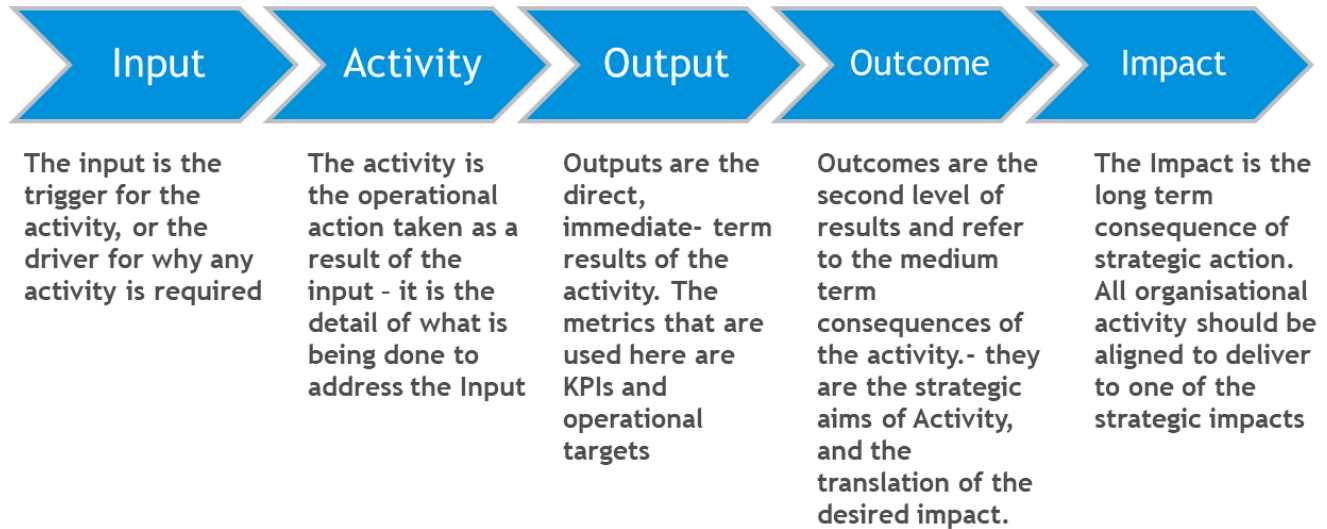

The input is the trigger for the activity, or the driver for why any activity is required

The activity is the operational action taken as a result of the input – it is the detail of what is being done to address the Input

Outputs are the direct, immediate- term results of the activity. The metrics that are used here are KPIs and operational targets

Outcomes are the second level of results and refer to the medium term consequences of the activity.- they are the strategic aims of Activity, and the translation of the desired impact.

The Impact is the long term consequence of strategic action. All organisational activity should be aligned to deliver to one of the strategic impacts

Figure 12: Strategic Framework

Using the strategic framework shown in Figure 12**Error! Reference source not found.**, we can use right-to-left thinking to map out the impact, outcomes, outputs, and activities for this strategy as shown in
Table 3: Measures of Success.

Impact	Outcome	Output	Activity
To provide a positive and effective customer experience, enabling our communities to thrive and prosper	- Improved customer visibility of interactions	*Target*: 20,000 online customer accounts set up *End date:* XX/2022	• Review and update key correspondence templates with channel shift 'nudges' • Implement improvements to MyDacorum / website • Plan and implement campaign to increase sign ups
	- Improved levels of customer satisfaction	*Target*: 85% satisfaction for all services provided by Customer Services *End date*: XX/2022	Implement customer ratings and feedback in customer journeys

		Target: 85% satisfaction for all services across the Council End date: XX/2023	Implement customer ratings and feedback in customer journeys
	- Significant reduction in unstructured incoming email to the organisation	Target: 50% reduction in email enquiries (replaced by forms and self-serve information) in Housing, Planning, Revenues and Benefits End date: XX/2022	Review and rationalise group email addresses; and implement approach to reduce email to high volume inboxes
		Target: 80% reduction in email enquiries (replaced by forms and self-serve information) in Housing, Planning, Revenues and Benefits End date: XX/2023	
	- Improved performance because of continuous improvement projects	Target: X initiatives completed per year to address performance improvements aligned to strategic aims. These initiatives will be identified through business intelligence and continuous improvement activity. End date: 31/12/2022 (resets annually)	Implement Service Level Agreements within customer journeys
			Implement corporate performance dashboards
			Implement continuous improvement cycles
			Provide refresher training for management roles (operational and functional) on the data and reports available within systems

Table 3: Measures of Success and targets

6 Who is accountable?

For the successful implementation and continuous improvement of the customer strategy, is it important to determine what the roles and responsibilities are within the organisation.

Below is a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed) for the delivery of this strategy and it's supporting actions.

	Chief Officer Group	Programme Team	Group Manager (People)	Group Managers	Councillors	Customers
Support the implementation of the principles in this strategy	A		R	R	C	
Model the behaviours that we expect of all staff during their interactions with our customers	R	R	A	R	R	
Design processes aligned to the principles within this strategy	I	A	C	R	I	C
Introduce new digital tools and processes		A		R	I	C
Introduce core concepts through objectives, training and transition into new ways of working			R	A	C	
Align performance measures and monitoring to corporate strategy	A	R	R	R	I	I
Own the Customer Engagement Strategy	A		R			
Own any Style/Communication Guides that are reviewed off the back of this strategy			R			
Implement the actions within the plan	C	R	A	R	I	I