

Basildon Borough Council

“Creating Opportunity”

Customer Strategy



Contents

	Page/s
1. Chief Executive and Leader's Introduction	3
2. Wider Transformation Programme and the Customer Strategy	4-6
3. Success Criteria and the Customer Excellence Principles	6
4. Future Customer Service Delivery Model	6-8
5. Customer Enquiry Process Categorisation	8-9
6. Customer Insight	9-10
7. Customer Access	10-11
8. Inclusion and Diversity	11
9. Current Customer Service Baseline	11-12
10. Benefit Evaluation	12-14
Appendix I – Overarching Design Principles	30
Appendix 2 – Current Customer Service Model	37

Why we are introducing a Customer Strategy

1. Chief Executive & Leader's Introduction

The Customer Strategy is an essential part of delivering the Council's five promises that underpin it. The strategy will make sure that we keep putting people at the heart of what we do. It aims to provide value for money services that make a better use of a shrinking pot of resources whilst at the same time responding to changes in customer behaviour and demand.

Delivering services online is both a more cost effective option for the council and one that is increasingly appealing to more of our residents. We know that internet services will not immediately work for everyone but the more we can shift customer transactions online the better use we can make of our scarce resources to provide more rounded support for the people in our community who need it most.

This strategy aims to simplify customer contact which will be managed by a centralised and simplified customer service centre, developed to resolve the majority of customer enquiries at first point of contact.

The strategy also reflects our determination to listen to local people and work with them using our customer insight to shape future services so they give our residents what they need, in the way that they need it.

Councillor Tony Ball, Leader of Basildon Borough Council

Bala Mahendran, Chief Executive - Basildon Borough Council

2. Wider Transformation Programme and the Customer Strategy

“Creating Opportunity”

This Customer Strategy forms a significant part of the wider modernisation agenda of the Council - a journey which aims to realise the aspirations set out in the Council’s “Creating Opportunities” Programme.

Vision

“To create opportunities for local people”

The associated Five Promises makes it clear that we are committed to;

- Getting the basics right in terms of service delivery
- Providing value for money
- Demanding good public services for our residents – even those services beyond our direct remit - by working with partners (Police, NHS and the County etc.)
- Supporting and developing the local economy
- Regenerating the Borough

These priorities are underpinned by the core values of being a **fair** Council, one that has **integrity** and a Council that harnesses **innovation**.

Customer Strategy & the Council’s Five Promises

The Five Promises makes it clear that the Council must be known for providing good public services – and that starts with good and consistent standard of customer service on the front line. This customer strategy will help Basildon Council to have a reputation for good services – those that are both modern and efficient.

To offer value for money is as important as ever for local authorities. This approach to customer services is driven by LEAN principles

- Value is determined by the customer
- Optimise flow and minimise waste in processes
- Drives improved customer satisfaction AND reduced cost

By centralising, reallocating and refocusing our resources the Customer Strategy will deliver better customer service from the first point of customer contact.

What will the strategy deliver?

Objectives of a New Operating Model for Customer Services

The Customer Strategy has five main aims which will help the newly established customer contact centre to deliver the standards of customer care we want and expect. These are:

1. We will provide a single comprehensive contact point for customer.

That means one set of contact details for customers; one number, one email address, one website, one contact centre – for all enquiries. The Customer Services Team will manage every enquiry, sending it to the appropriate person back office, unless it can be resolved at the first point of contact which is their aim.

2. Encourage use of the most cost effective channels – i.e. web services.

The Council will encourage people to make greater use of e-services and the Council's website if they want to and are able to use them. These are the most cost effective channels for the Council, but they also give greater flexibility to customers as to when they can be accessed.

3. Resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact
 - with a target of 80%

The Council's centralised Customer Contact Team will be resolution focused, and they will try and resolve enquiries at the first point of contact, if possible. The Council accepts that a number of enquiries may require specialist guidance or technical knowledge, in these cases the Customer Contact Team will manage the transfer of an enquiry to back office specialists.

4. The Council will have a 'single view' of customer & they will only have to 'tell us once'.

The Council will have an IT infrastructure that allows appropriate customer information to be shared across services. This ensures that we have the most up to date information of an individuals dealings with the Council when they take a customer enquiry. Customers will only have to tell us once a piece of information rather than having to repeat themselves across different departments. Customer information allows advisors to be more proactive in their dealings with customers, offering necessary support and signposting appropriate services.

5. End to end closure will be owned by Customer Services

The Council's Customer Advisors will take ownership for enquiries, ensuring that all matters are resolved in line with service standards.

3. Success Criteria and the Customer Excellence Principles

The Customer Service Excellence Standard is a Cabinet Office approved framework that measures the ability of an organisation, either public or private sector, to meet the needs of its customers.

To make sure that our services are as good as they can be and to check that we measure up to the best public services we will:

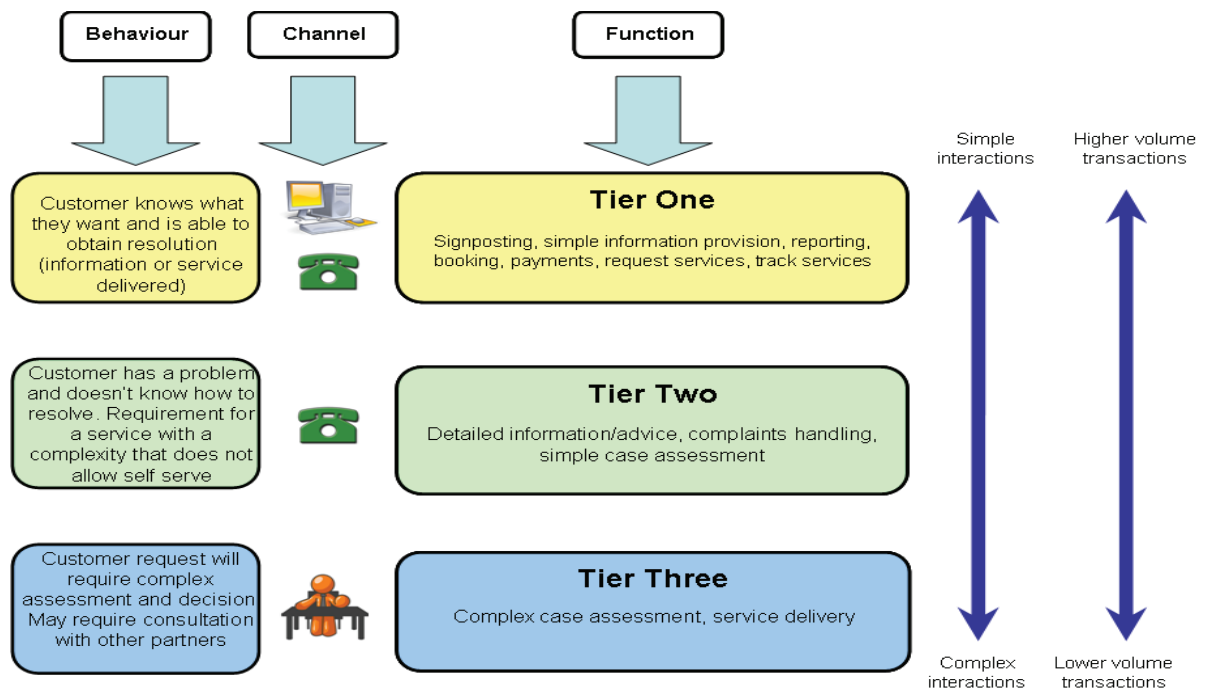
- Listen to customers and involve them in designing services for the future
- Develop a range of performance indicators and publish these regularly
- Seek accreditation under the Customer Services Excellence standard
 - **The culture of the organisation** - customer centric values and behaviours are embedded throughout the organisation.
 - **Information and access** – appropriate to role and focused on communications and delivery channels most appropriate for customers
 - **Service delivery** - listening to customer's views about our services and how they are provided; ensuring these views are considered along with key business performance metrics
 - **Timeliness and quality of service** – continuously challenging and improving services so that the service output is what customers expect, in the areas the council prioritises and can afford
 - **Effective use of customer insight** – all available information is appropriately analysed and used to shape services

We will also baseline all of our services to establish the true cost to serve and demonstrate savings as part of our annual budget process.

4. Future Customer Services Delivery Model

The Customer Strategy programme will **affect the entire Council** – all the Council's services will have an integrated customer service function based on the model below.

The following tiered customer service model is the future corporate approach. The Council will have a three tiered structure to resolve all customer enquiries.



Guiding Principles for Each Tier

Tier 1:

- Represents the corporate customer front line, for all the Council's services.
- Consists of generalist and multi-skilled advisors charged with resolving queries at first point of contact
- Focus on resolution of higher volume, but less complex enquiries, processes like information provision, payments, bookings etc.
- Customer advisors will actively 'nudge' customers to e-services and the web.

Tier 2:

- Consists of customer service specialists, providing advice and guidance to the Tier 1 resources.
- Tier 2 will oversee the resolution of lower volume, but more complex interactions.
- Tier 2 staff will likely have service specific knowledge.
- In periods of high customer demand, Tier 2 will field more routine requests for information/service to manage peaks in service demand.

Tier 3:

- Technical and professional support will be provided here to customers.

- Matters too specialist for tier 1 and tier 2 to resolve.
- The Council will strive to address enquiries prior to this point.
- Tiers 1 and 2 will provide a more proactive approach to managing enquiries with only specialist/enduring enquiries reaching tier 3, leaving specialists to do their job.

The idea is very straightforward:

All services should be accessible by every means i.e. web, phone, face to face, email and letter and by the use of social media.

By grouping like activities together and simplifying processes, we'll make it easier for customers to get the service they need quickly and easily. In general, around 80% of enquiries should be answered and dealt with at the point of contact.

This arrangement also frees up more specialist and expert staff to give their attention to more difficult issues.

5. Customer Service Process Categories

The customer contact flow gives a high level overview of how different customers service 'needs' will be categorised. The enclosed flow outlines the main customer service process categories provided by Council staff for customers.



- Categories 1 – 5 (above) will be resolved universally by Tier 1 staff.
- Category 6, the simple case assessment, will be resolved predominantly by tier two staff, unless tier 1 staff have been trained to resolve the matter.
- Category 8, the complex assessment will be delivered by specialist staff with technical knowledge.

- Customer advisors will oversee all customer enquiries through to category 9 – service delivery.

For a more detailed description of the design principles which lead to this way of working please see Appendix 1.

6. Customer Insight

Using customer intelligence as a basis to make business decisions is essential to the way we evolve the Council's business in the 21st century – particularly in a context where local authorities are being asked to do more for less.

In future we will use customer insight technologies more effectively to allow us to be more proactive when engaging with our customers. A 'simple view of the customer' begins with an integrated customer information hub (linked CRM systems) which will log all customer engagement with the Council – across services. This will enable Customer Advisors to be more proactive in their approach. When customers contact us, our staff will have comprehensive view, which is accurate and up to date, providing appropriate information about the individual and their dealings with us.

The development of customer insight will extend further, as we look to make greater corporate use of localised customer insight 'mapping' tools and maximise use of information we already have at our disposal.

Demographic and socio - economic data can be used very effectively to anticipate and plan the need for new or different services.

It can also help us improve our communications with customers by using the most appropriate medium and through appropriate use of language.

Customer intelligence strands include;

- Customer consultation and focus group insight
- Customer feedback – 'complaints, compliments and comments'
- Mystery shopping exercises
- Performance data
- Service take-up data
- Service access data – across different channels
- Demographic data – including credit information
- Indices of deprivation,
- Frontline staff 'intelligence'
- Elected members 'intelligence',
- Partner 'intelligence'

Demographic and other information on our customers will be used to develop a better understanding and insight into our customers needs. Wherever possible our services will be designed to meet these needs, and will be flexible to adapt to an

ever changing customer base. Customer information will inform and underpin our approach moving forward.

To make sure that information is gathered and used in a consistent way we are developing an Information Strategy that will complement this strategy and the 'Creating Opportunities' Programme as a whole. The aim will be to make sure that information, whether customer, financial, demographic etc., is collated, interpreted and made available to all relevant people inside the council and to our partners.

Managers will have clear responsibilities to use and share information well in planning and reviewing services, procurement, and in publishing data.

7. Customer Access

Accessibility and availability of our services is going to improve, with customers being able to access a substantial number of services, online, 24/7.

Basildon Council will engage and empower our customers, listening and acting on what they tell us – that's fundamental to good customer service. We will also offer full support to those who need it. However, we will not fuel a rights and entitlement mindset amongst those who we serve – this is not just about doing things for our communities, it is about helping communities to do things for themselves.

The Council will work with customers to help shape our communities for the better, an agreement based on trust, advice, mutual responsibility and respect.

Access Channels

- Face to face
- Telephone
- SMS
- Online – e-services, website (for information)
- Correspondence including post and email
- Social media / Twitter / Facebook
- Future option - e-contact (live personal support provided via the web)

Guided 'Channel Shift'

We will encourage external customers to channels that are both effective and efficient for the customer and for the service provided – predominantly these will be online. This channel shift will be underpinned by lean processes and enabling technologies – so that, where possible, customers can be supported to self serve if and when they want to.

Internally we will make sure that everyday functions such as Human Resources, Finance, IT etc are provided on line through self service systems. This will mirror our approach to external customers and ensure that we use professional resources well.

We will need Information Technology (IT) that supports this new way of working. Members will be approving the IT Strategy and will ensure that we have the right architecture to allow systems to join up in providing modern customer access, a single view of the customer, customer intelligence, performance and financial information, and the ability to share data and information across the council.

8. Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion & Diversity is integral to how Basildon Council plans to deliver excellent customer service. We are committed to ensuring that all our customers have fair access to services and that those services are tailored to meet their diverse needs. This means using appropriate contact and communication channels to make it easier for our diverse customers to contact the Council.

Having a Customer Services Centre providing services from a single point enables the Council to provide greater consistency and control to those who have diverse needs. The current disparate customer service model will not have the same levels of consistency, and appropriately trained staff across the board.

Basildon Council will use intelligence about our customers to understand the local population that we serve and their current and future needs. This will be achieved through customer profiling and segmentation to ensure services are responsive to diverse community needs. No one should be disadvantaged through contact with the Council or the way services are organised and delivered. Basildon Council will make services accessible to everyone, irrespective of geographical barriers, age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership status.

Basildon Council is committed to engaging with a range of 'communities of interest' in the borough to get a good understanding of their service needs. We will monitor service take up by the nine 'protected characteristics,' as designated in the Equality Act 2010, and we will look to make improvements in order to continually tackle discrimination and exclusion and improve customer access.

We will use Service Impact Assessments to ensure that services are discrimination free and use customer satisfaction data to help identify where services need improvement or redesign. We will look to adopt new technology to improve customer access and positively promote fairness, equality and inclusion.

9. Current Customer Service Baseline

In 2011 the Council received approximately 680,000 telephone calls, 84,000 face to face visits at the Basildon Centre reception and 3.4 million Council web page views (835,000 individual user 'sessions' on the website).

The existing Customer Service department covers the reception & general enquiries, cashiers, the Streetcare IVR system, freedom of information requests, Ombudsman and data protection. However, at present the majority of Council

departments handle customer enquiries at a service level rather than via a centralised customer contact centre.

Each department has individual processes in relation to resolving customer contact, bound together by a corporate set of Customer Standards. In the current framework customer service functions are regularly merged with technical roles. Such a blurring of roles means that the Council is not necessarily using colleagues with technical knowledge in the most cost-effective way. Evidence has shown that up to 80 % of customer contact can be resolved without technical advice, provided information channels are accurate i.e. the Council's website, and if service level processes are clear and uniform.

The Council's existing Customer Service framework (which is outlined in Appendix 2) is designed from the 'inside-out' with access channels based around the Council's structures and microstructures. The future model will be rebuilt from the 'outside in' with uniform access channels providing customer service based on customer need & financial viability (i.e. where it is appropriate we will actively 'nudge' to the web & self-serve).

With the existing framework it is difficult to provide consistency with the Council's customer service across departments, and it becomes increasingly challenging to moderate and energise any corporate channel shift as each department manages its own access channels.

10. Benefit Evaluation

A recent independent study has provided evidence of the scale of savings that could be made through the introduction of a new way of working. This is estimated at £2.1m, although this figure is subject to confirmation through the development of a detailed business case.

The savings would arise from the reduction in work volumes due to channel shift (especially self service), the elimination of duplication, reduction in errors, and greater automation.

Evidence from elsewhere shows that these savings can be made provided that a comprehensive programme of change is put in place and carried through.

The benefits to customers are readily apparent. Lower cost services that are easily understood and accessed, and designed in ways that the customer wants. Customer satisfaction with the council and its services should increase significantly.

Non Financial Benefits

- Achieving and consistently maintaining the Customer Service Excellence Standards

- Reduced contact volumes through higher cost channels (channel shift of 20% of base-line services across all service contacts to self-service channels in 2 years)
- Reduced average handling times for customers – greater numbers of enquiries resolved at first point of interaction
- Improved customer satisfaction from a base position (target to be achieved at completion of baselining)
- Increased employee satisfaction with levels of user feedback and engagement (reduced customer service complaints)
- End to end ownership of customer enquiry by customer advisors
- Brand recognition of Basildon Council as lead in customer focus and enabling service access

APPENDIX I - Overarching Design Principles

General Principles

1. Each customer contact is aligned to a generic process type and is routed to an appropriately skilled resource for onward progression and resolution.
2. Process maps are defined for each interaction type with data requirements for the particular service specified.
3. Processes are uniform across all access channels thus ensuring that customers receive a consistent and familiar service via each touch point.
4. Each process is designed to minimise incorrect routing of contacts and maximise resolution at first point of contact.
5. Tier One interactions will be managed according to channel with specific teams established for telephony, face to face and correspondence handling (email, fax and post). Some rotation of staff will be undertaken but this will be in line with operational requirements and specific developmental needs of resources.
6. Tier Two resources will manage cross-channel interactions. Some rotation of staff across sites will be undertaken but this will be in line with operational requirements and specific developmental needs of resources.
7. Tier One/Two staff will have access to customer details, past interactions and be able to track the progress of existing contacts through one system.
8. Instances may occur where an interaction is resolved at first point of contact but which represents either an ongoing or anticipated issue/problem (i.e. anti-social behaviour). On such occasions, the contact will be recorded, resolved and referred electronically to Tier Two for Tier One enquiries and Tier Three for Two Tier interactions for review and assessment as to whether further investigation is required.
9. Where an interaction is not resolvable at first point of contact, the customer will be advised of any next steps and relevant service level agreements (SLAs).
10. Where a contact is transferred between tiers or services, this is recorded to identify potential process, knowledge and/or adherence issues.
11. Based on service and interaction type, CRM will identify the appropriate Tier.
12. CRM (knowledge base) will be the primary source of information for front line staff.
13. A workforce management solution will be used to ensure an appropriate fit between customer demand and resource.
14. A competency and performance management framework exists and is based on cross-tier and tier-specific principles.
15. Cross-channel customer satisfaction mechanisms will be employed to elicit feedback from service users.

16. Focus groups will be established to engage customers in the design and development of the front line operation.

Online Channel

17. Provision will be made for customers to self-serve for all Tier One interactions.
18. Tier Two interactions can be initiated online but may require intervention by Council staff for onward resolution
19. Interactions performed by customers via the web will be accessible to Council staff through CRM.
20. Customers can track the progress of interactions via the web.

Telephone Channel

21. Interactive voice response (IVR) will be used to effectively route telephony based interactions to the appropriate Tier and where possible, provide simple information, signpost customers to online self-serve capability and promote the automated payments line.
22. Signposting type interactions will be screened to identify whether the request can be resolved at point of contact (i.e. simple information provision).
23. Blind transfers will not be employed (i.e. call transfer without introduction). If a colleague is not available to receive an interaction, the customer will be handed off electronically.
24. Where an interaction is transferred across tiers / services, the minimum data set required during transfer is:
 - ◆ Enquiry type
 - ◆ Name
 - ◆ Contact number
 - ◆ Additional information may be required and this will be mapped on a service by service basis.

Correspondence Channel

25. All paper-based documentation for in-scope services will be scanned by Tier One resources.
26. Where paper-based documentation cannot be scanned, an electronic case will be created (for audit/tracking purposes).
27. Email interactions will be automatically routed to Tier One.
28. Fax messages will be digitised and converted to an email and automatically routed through to Tier One.

Face to Face Channel

29. All customers will be greeted (meet and greet) by a Tier One member of staff to ascertain the nature of the enquiry.
30. Signposting and simple information provision, where possible, will be completed at point of contact through assisted self-serve. Where the transaction time is anticipated to exceed a defined threshold, specific level of complexity or during periods of peak demand, the customer will be allocated to a Tier One or Tier Two queue.
31. During period of peak demand, scheduled appointments should be encouraged for Tier Two interactions.

1.1 TIER ONE PRINCIPLES

General Principles

1. Tier One advisors are multi-skilled in a defined number of services and are supported by processes, the necessary systems and requisite information to resolve interactions at first point of contact.
2. Tier One advisors manage the following interaction types:
 - ◆ Signposting
 - ◆ Simple information provision
 - ◆ Reporting (including tell us something, appeals and objections)
 - ◆ Request a service
 - ◆ Track a service
 - ◆ Booking and Payments
 - ◆ Assisted self-serve
3. A service-driven approach will be adopted for Tier One interactions (i.e. ascertain the nature of the service first as nominal details may not always be required).

4. Standardised data recording standards will be in place for each interaction type to ensure that the correct information is captured at point of contact. Signposting and simple information type enquiries will typically be treated as anonymous with the following details captured:

- ◆ Enquiry type
- ◆ Resolution
- ◆ Channel

Where nominal details are required, the below data items will be recorded:

- ◆ Name
- ◆ Address
- ◆ Contact telephone number / email address (if appropriate)

Optional information may include date of birth (to support ID&V).

Additional information (i.e. payment details) may be required for specific interactions.

Telephone Channel

5. Where a Tier One resource 'signposts' a customer to a service within the Council, a "warm transfer" will be employed but the customer will not be offered direct contact details for the individual or service requested. For signposting outside of the Council, direct contact details will be offered and provided.
6. Where a Tier One resource can not resolve the enquiry at point of receipt, the contact will be recorded and either:
7. Handed off electronically to a Tier Two or Tier Three resource;
8. Transferred to a Tier Two or Three resource via a "warm hand-off" with necessary information relayed to minimise repetition on the part of the customer.
9. On occasions where contact is transferred from Tier One, ownership transfers to the receiving Tier / Service.
10. For each interaction type, Tier One advisors will proactively "nudge" customers to the self-serve channel either through signposting or through mediated access.
11. To reduce transaction times, frequently asked questions and standardised responses (i.e. document templates, etc) will be made available to Tier One resources.

Correspondence Channel

12. Correspondence for in-scope services will be received through Tier One.
13. A proportion of contacts will be resolved through the use of standardised templates and documents.

14. Where correspondence can not be resolved within Tier One, the case will be updated and handed off electronically to the relevant Tier / Service for onward progression.
15. Ownership for correspondence handed off will transfer to the receiving Tier / Service.

Face to Face Channel

16. A Tier One resource will deliver a meet and greet service at each face to face location.
17. Signposting and some simple information provision will be completed at point of contact through assisted self-serve. However, where the transaction time is anticipated to exceed a defined threshold, specific level of complexity or during peak periods of traffic, the customer will be allocated to a Tier One or Tier Two queue.
18. Customers seeking:
 - ◆ Simple information provision
 - ◆ Reporting
 - ◆ Request / track a service
 - ◆ Booking and Payments

Will typically be allocated to a Tier One queue for onward progression.
19. Where a misdirected interaction is routed to a Tier One resource unable to resolve the enquiry, the contact will be recorded and allocated to the next available Tier Two resource. Where possible and appropriate, scheduled appointments should be booked.
20. On occasions where contact is transferred from Tier One, ownership transfers to the receiving Tier / Service.

1.2 TIER TWO PRINCIPLES

General Principles

1. Tier Two advisors are multi-skilled in a small number of functional specialist areas focused on:
 - ◆ Providing detailed advice
 - ◆ Complaints handling
 - ◆ Undertaking simple case assessment.
2. A service-driven approach will be adopted for Tier Two interactions (i.e. ascertain the nature of the service first as nominal details may not always be required).

3. Tier Two resources will proactively develop knowledge based articles for those interactions where it is identified that none are in existence or current information is inaccurate.
4. Standardised data recording standards will be in place for each Tier Two interaction types to ensure that the correct information is captured at point of contact. The following data items will be collected for each interaction:
 - ◆ Name
 - ◆ Address
 - ◆ Contact telephone number / email address (if appropriate)

Optional information may include date of birth (to support ID&V).

Additional information (i.e. payment details) may be required for specific interactions.

Telephone Channel

5. Where a Tier Two resource receives a Tier One enquiry, this should be resolved at point of contact.
6. Where a Tier Two resource can not resolve an enquiry, the contact will be recorded and either:
 7. Transferred to a Tier Three resource via a “warm hand-off” with necessary information relayed to minimise repetition on the part of the customer.
 8. Handed off electronically to a Tier Three resource
 9. A scheduled appointment made with a Tier Two or Three resource
10. In either situation, the customer will be advised of next steps.
11. On occasions where contact is transferred, ownership transfers to the receiving tier or service.

Correspondence Channel

12. Where correspondence can not be resolved within Tier Two, the case will be updated and handed off electronically to the relevant Tier / Service for onward progression.

Face to Face Channel

13. Customers seeking:
 - ◆ Detailed advice
 - ◆ Complaints handling
 - ◆ Simple case assessment
14. Will be allocated to a Tier Two queue for onward progression.

15. Where a Tier Two resource can not resolve the enquiry, the contact will be recorded and either:

- ◆ Handed off electronically to a Tier Three resource
- ◆ A scheduled appointment made with a Tier Two/Three resource

In either situation, the customer will be advised of next steps.

16. On occasions where contact is transferred from Tier Two, ownership transfers to the receiving Tier / Service.

1.3 TIER THREE PRINCIPLES

General Principles

1. Tier Three resources undertake complex case assessment (including complaints management) typically through referral via the customer front line. Where a relationship exists, provision may be made for the customer to contact a Tier Three resource directly.
2. A customer-driven approach will be adopted for Tier Three interactions as those individuals contacting the service area will have been referred or have an established relationship.
3. Where a Tier Three resource receives a misdirected contact directly from the customer, this is transferred to Tier One for ongoing progression and resolution. On such occasions, ownership of the contact transfers to the receiving Tier or Service.
4. Where a Tier Three resource receives a misdirected contact from either Tier One or Two, this should be directed back to the appropriate Tier. On such occasions, ownership of the contact transfers to the receiving Tier or Service.

Appendix 2

Current Customer Service Model – Basildon Council

