



Corporate Customer Access Strategy

2020 to 2024

The way our customers interact with us is changing

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FOREWORD

2020 has been an extraordinary year that none of us could have predicted. Coronavirus has impacted on all of us. As a council, our priorities have been to keep our residents safe and to support them through one of the most difficult times any of us have ever known. A key part of our response has been ensuring that Southwark residents were able to support the information and support they needed through our customer services functions.

This included setting up a special telephone hotline and email box for residents to use with any questions and service requests relating to COVID-19. Liaising with the Community Hub and the voluntary sector, we supported vulnerable residents and provided advice and support on a range of issues. During COVID-19 we have responded to 10,684 telephone enquiries and 9,841 emails from residents (@ 20/11/20), and helped with 713 enquiries from businesses. These enquiries covered everything from assistance with shopping and picking up prescriptions to welfare support and loneliness. Businesses were also able to receive advice on how to claim government funding and local funding during the lockdowns.

The crisis has taught us many things about how we can better provide and support residents across Southwark and informs this Customer Access Strategy which is published as we begin to look to the recovery. The strategy has been developed to simplify the way we provide services to the people of Southwark. It explains what we want to do to enable people to get the best out of the council and will help us ensure that everyone working for the council:

- Understands their role and purpose and knows what is expected of them
- Has the right tools for the job (increasingly this is digital and tech)
- Helps to create the right customer service culture, where if there were a choice, people would choose Southwark."

Underpinning the strategy are three core principles

- Channel shift: our aim is to be digital first; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings.
- Listening and responding to customers so we deliver excellent services
- No one left behind: ensuring everyone can access the services and information they need

recognising that not everyone will be able to access digital services.

We have strong foundations to build on. Since the first customer access strategy was published in 2012, the number of registered MySouthwark personalised account holders continues to grow and has now passed the 100,000 mark, new technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, have enabled customers to access information and carry out transactions at a time and place that is convenient to them and we have saved millions by bringing services back in house.

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to customers setting out maximum response times, our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

"This strategy is intended to cover all council services. It is however important to recognise that some complex and/or sensitive services (e.g. adult social care, children's services, planning) may not be able to strictly adhere to a common set of service standards. Neither does this strategy supersede any legislative response timescales."

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to our customers:

- Setting out maximum response times and service standards, they can expect when contacting the council.
- Training for all customer facing staff to ensure all residents receive a consistent and good customer experience.
- Up to date and easy to use on-line services so that residents can request a service at a time convenient to them and be able to track their request.
- Opportunities for customers to provide feedback. We need to know when we've done something wrong so we can rectify it. Customers can also tell us when we've done a good job too.
- Commit to maintaining traditional service access (telephone and face to face) for those in our community unable to access digital services.
- Our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

Councillor Alice Macdonald, Cabinet Member,
Equalities and Communities

Executive summary

“The quality of service, behaviour, attitude, courtesy and more, by any Southwark employee or contractor is how our residents, clients and customers judge the whole council. We aim to get it 100% right, 100% of the time, but we’re only human and we all make mistakes. So, when we do, we have to ‘own up’ immediately, say sorry straight away and put it right as soon as possible.

The Customer Access Strategy, along with the complementary Digital and Modernisation strategies, with strategic objectives will set out our approach to these challenges over the next four years across all council services.

This strategy is the latest of a number of new and refreshed strategies which together, aim to deliver improved IT and digital services and an improved customer experience for all.

This strategy aims to deliver the following four outcomes:

Deliver a great customer experience:

- By providing clear communication and information, helping people make informed decisions.
- By providing and improving the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council website and ensure two-way dialogue with customers, being more consistent and responsive.
- Keeping customers up-to-date on progress, setting and managing their expectations be open and transparent about what the Council does and its service standards.
- Measuring the customer experience in a meaningful way to continuously improve services involving customers in the definition and improvement of new and existing services.
- Providing customers with choices on how they access services, whilst promoting digital up-take gathering appropriate customer insight and then using it to inform service improvements.
- Redesigning the most popular processes end-to-end to encourage customers to self-serve ensures customer-facing staff are kept informed of major Council initiatives.

Build the skills and capabilities in the workforce.

- Lead by example, walking the walk, talking the talk, and being consistent in what is said and done promoting the values and culture we expect from each other.
- Role model great customer service behaviours providing staff with the digital and customer service skills needed to deliver great service.
- Involve staff in decision-making, in the design and improvement of services by promoting culture of collaboration, measured risk taking, and no blame.
- Redevelop relevant policies helping staff to take decisions and work confidently to improve the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council’s intranet.

Provide technology that enables collaboration.

- Improve and extend existing Wi-Fi, internet bandwidth and remote access services.
- Make audio-conferencing an effective option with additional tools and services.
- Provide video-conference solutions in offices and for remote access on computers.
- Introduce cloud-based (SaaS) software solutions for cost-effective collaboration.

Implement modern systems for data-driven decision making:

- Reduce the number of outdated systems to simplify access to information.
- Invest in the skills and capacity needed to integrate and perform analysis on data promoting the use of meaningful measures as part of the decision-making process.
- Enable data sharing through information sharing protocols with other organisations and publishing open data through a new website to better support communities and businesses.
- A holistic view of the customer, through the consolidation of systems and data.

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

Part 1: Introduction

Our Customer Access Strategy has been developed to simplify the way we provide services to the people of Southwark. The Strategy is about responding to our customers' current and future needs; tailoring services to meet local needs; improving access to services by engaging with the community and empowering them to be fully involved in providing solutions.

Our services need to be valued by those that use them and also be responsive to the changing needs of our customers and to emerging technologies that enable services to be delivered in new ways that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Reliable

If we are to ensure future service delivery meets the customers' demands a corporate approach to customer services is required to collectively revise the structures and approaches to deliver services.

The Customer Vision

Our Customer Vision is to make it easy for everyone living, visiting, working or studying in Southwark to access services where and when they need them. We will deliver a quality experience for all our customers, regardless of when or how they make contact and we will offer appropriate and relevant services that are joined with other agencies.

Our approach will be to influence the way our customers interact with us and help them to move to more efficient means of accessing services. We will focus on developing high quality digital services from beginning to end which will be easy to use and delivered in a timely manner. Self-service will enable access to an increasing range of information and services available 24/7.

We do recognise that some of our customers who have varying needs and or more complex needs will continue to require our face to face and phone channels. We will assist these customers in accessing our services and will strive to gradually build their confidence, trust and skills enabling them to ultimately become self-serving.

We are also aware that some customers may reach a stage in their transactions with us where they need to have the reassurance of speaking to a member of staff

and we will ensure that this option is easily available to them.

The successful delivery of this Strategy will result in significant changes to the way in which our customers will access our services. Staff will be focussed on meeting, even exceeding customers' needs. Local knowledge will enable services to be tailored to the communities' requirements. New technologies will be exploited to make access even easier and a wide range of agencies will be working together to integrate service delivery.

We will:

- Treat residents as if they were a valued member of our own family;
- Be open, honest and accountable;
- Spend money as if it were from our own pocket;
- Work for everyone to realise their own potential;
- Make Southwark a place to be proud of.
- Always work to make Southwark more equal and just
- Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism.

Delivering our Vision

Delivery of our corporate vision during and post COVID-19 and beyond 2020 within the Customer Access Strategy will require significant work over the next four years across a range of work streams across the Council.

We will define the behaviours for both customers and staff via a review of our staff behaviours and customer charter. We will promote our fairer future promises by supporting managers to endorse and challenge values and to collect and oversee ongoing performance improvements from across the Council.

We also want all those who live and work and use council services in the borough to have the digital tools and skills they need:

- We will continue to work with partners to improve Southwark's digital infrastructure, and we will support residents and community groups to improve their skills so they are able to access everything the digital world has to offer.
- We will develop digital platforms and tools that allow 24/7 access for customers.
- We will use customer surveys to measure each customer access channel to identify areas for improvement.
- We will encourage smarter working practices to avoid duplication of future work and contact to avoid customers visiting unnecessarily.
- We will increase joined-up working with back-office

services and data sharing with partners to improve customer services processes.

In order to achieve the above we cannot escape the impact on council services of significant budget cuts. This means we will have to continue to look at new ways of doing more with less, including charging for some services, working with new and different partners outside the council, and delivering value for money.

Understanding and Empowering our Customers

Ensuring we understand who our customers are or may be, how they interact with us, what our customers think of the services we offer and how we offer them.

- We will develop reliable customer insight allowing us to understand the characteristics needs and preferences of the groups of current and potential users. Particular efforts will be made to identify hard to reach groups by creating and securely maintaining accurate records of all our customers.
- We will coordinate customer consultations, using a range of methods appropriate to their needs, integral to continually improving our service. Our strategies and opportunities for consulting will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.
- We will set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and judging our performance against them by asking specific questions relating to the key areas identified in this strategy.

Part 2: Background

Southwark is a diverse borough with people from a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds. Nearly 50% of the population of Southwark are members of an ethnic minority.

Southwark has a population of over 317,256 people, 9% of Southwark's population is aged 65 or older, compared with 16% in England and we have over 15,000 businesses in Southwark and over 120 languages spoken in Southwark of which 11% of households do not have English as a first language.

Southwark's Council Plan describes our vision for the borough. It sets out our priorities for the next four years, and the commitments that we have made to the people of Southwark.¹

Our Council Plan is more than just a set of promises, it explains the type of borough we want to be and the values that will guide us to get there. It is the action plan for the council and will shape what every team and member of staff does and how we can work together as one council to achieve our shared ambition of a fairer future for all.

In Southwark a fairer future for all is:

- The best start in life: clean air, great schools and opportunities to thrive;
- The quality homes that you and your family need;
- A great place to live with clean, green and safe communities;
- A healthy borough where your background doesn't determine your life chances;
- Full employment, where everyone has the skills to play a full part in our economy.

Southwark's Context

Southwark is an exciting and vibrant borough in the heart of London. We have a hugely diverse and talented population living, working and enjoying the borough from Rotherhithe and Bermondsey in the north, through Walworth, Camberwell and Peckham to Dulwich in the south. The council is proudly ambitious, wanting the borough to be the best it can be and for the opportunities we enjoy to be available for all.

The world around us helps shape how we can deliver this ambition. The Government, the economy and policies like Brexit all impact on what we do and how we do it. We also recognise that we are in a world where people are increasingly distrustful of government and politics and we have to respond to that by making sure we are open, honest and transparent with everyone we work with.

Financial challenge

Southwark faces a huge financial challenge. The Government has been cutting spending and the local government has been particularly hard hit, making it more and more difficult for councils to deliver services. There have been reductions in spending across the country, but Southwark has faced some of the severest cuts. Since 2010 we have been forced to find savings of £227million – meaning we have lost nearly half the budget we had only eight years ago.

That is why we have been careful with our budgets and have been treating every penny wisely, as if it is coming from our own pockets. We have listened to what our residents say is important to them and done all we can to protect frontline services, while keeping council tax low.

Our priority has been to protect our most vulnerable residents, which is why we have maintained spending on frontline services like children's care while doing everything we can to make efficiency savings in other areas.

Ongoing budget pressures mean we know we will have to make difficult decisions. We will continue to manage budgets carefully and keep council tax low, only raising it to protect the most vulnerable.

¹ Council Plan 2018/19 – 2021/22

National challenges

Southwark faces new challenges. National government decisions have a huge impact on our ability to deliver for residents locally. Legislation such as the Housing and Planning Act and the introduction of Universal Credit impact on residents and have put more pressure on the council.

The council will stand up for residents and challenge issues that have a negative impact on our ability to deliver for local people. We also face challenges from the uncertainty of Brexit. Residents in Southwark voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the European Union, but across the country the referendum result means that the UK will be leaving the EU. We do not yet know what this will mean for EU residents in the borough, for businesses that trade with or rely on the EU or the impact that the Government's decisions will have on our economy or on London as a dynamic modern international city.

Part 3: The Culture of the Organisation

Defining behaviours

- We will define behaviours for both customers and staff via a review of our staff behaviours and customer charter.
- We will promote our Fairer Future promises by supporting managers to endorse and challenge values and to collect and oversee ongoing performance improvements.
- Staff must be polite, friendly and professional and understand customer needs by using customer insight, including the experience of customer-facing staff, to inform policy and strategy development and service improvement activity that supports the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.
- We will use feedback, to ensure all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and by protecting the customers' privacy both in face to face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information
- We will provide customer service staff with appropriate training, ensuring they can deliver the quality of service we expect for our customers.

To achieve the above enhancing our current team with the right people will be essential to deliver professional, efficient staffing. We recognise that specific qualities are required for these positions and we will ensure that any additional staff recruited meet the responsibilities and duties required to deliver modern and effective services to our customers.

Information and Access

- We will be offering better choices to meet customer needs and preferences by working together with our

borough/District/Health/Police partners and other providers to deliver coordinated services with clear lines of accountability, and demonstrating that these arrangements have benefits for our customers.

- We will provide accurate and complete information about the range of services available, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge.
- We will continue engaging within the wider communities and demonstrating the ways in which we support those communities.

Southwark Stands Together Pledge

- We pledge to promote an open and transparent culture where employees who experience/see racism or discrimination are able to raise it and expect the issue to be dealt with swiftly and fairly.
- We pledge to listen to and amplify our diverse voices within our organisations on how we create an inclusive, fair and representative workplace at all levels.
- We pledge to work to address and prevent structural racial inequalities and structural racism within our organisation, the organisations we partner with and within the service we deliver.
- We pledge to champion organisations that address racial injustices and organisations that promote equality and diversity.
- We pledge to ensure that people of all backgrounds can rise to the top of the organisation.

Part 4: The right tools for the job

Measuring our performance, the right way

Our Customer services Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reviewed annually and we want our KPIs to measure performance ensuring continuous development in key priority services is managed and can be reported. Below are the KPIs we will report against:

- Percentage increase in the number of online transactions
- Percentage increase in number of visitors to the Council's webpages
- Percentage increase in the number of online payments
- Percentage increase in the use of online forms
- Number of My Southwark touchpoints
- Number of My Southwark sign-ups

Indicators for the Customer Contact Centre:

- Percentage of calls dealt with at first point of contact
- Percentage of calls answered 180 seconds

- Percentage of calls successfully meeting the quality standard
- Reduction in calls as digital services are more embedded, over time
- Number of complaints and or compliments:
- Regular Customer Satisfaction reports
- Reputation and publicity
- First point resolution

Spending wisely

We will ensure we operate high-quality customer services that are focused on making every penny count, which takes advantage of online services and where appropriate, enabling those customers that wish to as well as those that are socially isolated to be seen face to face or through telephone contact.

Statutory Standards we must achieve:

- Respond to Freedom of Information Requests, (FOI) Environmental Information Regulation (EIR's) within 20 working days
- Respond to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requests within 30 calendar days

Getting it right the first time

We will know we get things right the first time. We will provide a consistent and standard approach on performance reporting regardless of contact method used.

Complaints

- We will acknowledge complaints within three working days
- We will respond to stage one complaints within 15 working days.
- We will respond to stage two complaints within 25 working days

Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

We will respond to FOI requests within 20 working days (statutory)

Member enquiries

We will respond to member enquiries within 10 working days

Part 5: Smart Working

Smart Working is an approach to working that broadens how, where and when we work, helps us save money and the environment through better use of our work

spaces, digital tools and skills that will make us fit for the future.

We have accelerated much of our work through the Smart working programme in light of COVID-19 supporting staff with working remotely during these challenging times including new tools for keeping in touch with one-another as well as guidance and tips around remote working and virtual meetings.

In the 5-week period from 16th March 2020 we have had a staggering 236,928 Private Chat Messages sent; 4218 Online Meetings held and 11130 Audio Calls all through Microsoft Teams. These figures amongst the case studies we've heard of from teams all over the Council demonstrate how quickly colleagues have adapted to using new technology to support a very different way of working.

The five principles of Smart Working

Trust - Staff will be empowered, where possible, to work at the most effective time and location, ensuring the needs of the service remain a priority.

Collaboration - We are using tools that will enable a collaborative working environment and seamless connectivity, regardless of work location.

Sustainability - Smart Working will support the Council's sustainability objectives by helping us improve our use of our work spaces to save money, time and reduce unnecessary travel.

Outcomes - Performance management will focus on results and agreed outcomes rather than presence.

Activity based working - Office workspaces will be designed so that staff can choose the most appropriate space to undertake work activities, recognising differing needs of individuals.

Part 6: Listening and responding to our customers

We will consult with our customers and use feedback to inform the service improvement process. We will continue to use mystery shopping to give us insight into how our customers access services.

Some of the findings from the feedback received about the services we currently provide are listed here. We use this feedback to develop to help improve services by developing programmes of work to address these.

- Customers like the My Southwark citizen account and are able to access personalised information at a time, convenient to them but would like to see more services added. Customers did however find that searching for information could be confusing and would like better and easier navigation.

- Customers would like their enquiries to be resolved as quickly as possible without being passed around from person to person or department to department.
- Customers would like to process transactions on a variety of devices, for example, smartphones' or tablets.
- Customers are happy to transact online for simple access to services, in particular younger customers who only want to transact online and expect a seamless, interactive experience.
- Customers would like more consistent on-line forms; for example, payment processes.
- Customers would like to be kept up to date with progress of their enquiry.
- Staff would like a better view of the customer journey in order to deliver a good customer experience.
- Get the services they need the first time at their first point of contact from fully trained and knowledgeable staff.
- Are able to use one single point of contact alongside an enhanced My Southwark function to report, request, apply, track and pay for all council services.
- Are offered a culture of respect, accountability, personal ownership and frontline innovation.
- Receiving more compliments, e.g. through the GovMetric system or in surveys.
- Residents who are happy with our costs for the delivery of customer services.

Part 7: Channel shift

How we will develop access channels

We will develop access channels using customer feedback to identify customer contact preferences and to recognise that these preferences will change depending on the type of enquiry, interaction or transaction. The council aim is to be digital by default; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings.²

A digital council is a better council

The council aims to be digital first; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings. Many customers are used to accessing goods and services online in their daily lives and many businesses are only available online.

As further services become available online, take-up will increase in line with customer expectations and we have already made great progress building our online, digital, customer access services.

The next step is to expand the number of services online and maintain and enhance the existing functions with channel shift progression with initiatives to increase awareness of digital resources available to our customers.

Guiding principles³

The Society for innovation, technology and modernisation (SOCITM) conducted a study across 120 local councils which estimated that the cost of contact for face to face transactions averages £8.62, for phone £2.83, but for web only 15 pence.

Summary of the most expensive to the cheapest transactions are detailed below with explanation on how the Council will achieve cost savings and promote the channel shift objectives:

² Channel shift relates to customers moving from one method of contact, largely traditional, to another digital method and preferring to use it, not reverting back to previous behaviours.

³ <https://socitm.net/>

No one is left behind

We are very mindful of the need to ensure all residents have access to council services, no matter their needs and capabilities. It is important that the council maintains access to services via all channels, not just online.

Each time we make a change to our customer service delivery, we carry out an equalities impact assessment.

How do we know if we've got it right?

Our plans are ambitious. Southwark Council wants to ensure that residents are satisfied with their customer services experience and understand what they can expect from our services.

- We will ensure all customers are clear on what our services offer and the timescales in which we will respond.
- Feel we are easy to contact and that all staff are knowledgeable, friendly and approachable.
- Ensure that where possible enquiries are resolved at first contact.
- Residents know we are listening and responding to their feedback.

We will know we have been successful when our residents are:

- More satisfied with the customer experience from all council-wide services.
- Happy with our answer rates and waiting times via the telephone.
- We are able to see measurable and accountable standards.
- Are able to access our services 24/7 and able to self-serve via simple to use processes and systems.

Face to face

Face to face transactions are considered to be the most expensive therefore we will continue to only provide face to face services where there is specific need or a service is not available on-line or via the telephone.

We will support our customers to use self service facilities and will signpost to organisations that can help.

Letter

- We will develop e-billing across the Council and for this to be adopted by all services.
- We will be reducing print and postage costs in line with ongoing services reviews, for reducing back-office inefficiencies.
- We will be developing and expanding the use of SMS to enable savings in print and postage in all services.
- We will reduce the number of letters sent out as a hardcopy and moving over to electronic solutions and remove the need for hardcopy annual billing processes.

Telephone

- We will invest in an agile Contact Centre system, this will allow for intuitive responses to high volumes of contact via different streams, using a blended approach.
- We will continue to improve and streamline the use of the telephony Interactive Voice Recognition (IVRs) to route calls appropriately to the right service area or digital, automated information, customer agent.

Email

Incoming emails will be integrated to online forms and automatically routed directly through to the relevant service area.

Online web self-serve

- We will review and integrate customer journeys across the Council optimising use of all systems.
- We will develop in-built customer feedback mechanisms and user testing as part of the council's redesign.
- We will implement the use of web chat in the council, using it as a triage for customer contact. Increasing the availability of customers uploading their evidence online, including iPhones.
- We will use internal electronic online forms that route directly to back-office services across the council to

Tech and Digital

To enable the digital first approach and to act as a digital council we will:⁴

- Establish a standardised approach to digital service redesign and utilise corporately endorsed digital tools: online application forms (e-forms), digital payments, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), IT system and My Southwark citizen account.
- Make best use of IT infrastructure to enable sharing of non-sensitive data across departments and share our experiences by engaging with customers.

Processes

We will streamline internal, manual processes and scrutinize back office systems offering:

- A personalised 'customer account'
- Introduce artificial intelligence (AI) for customers looking for simple advice or factual information and be signposted to an alternative channel.
- Introduce webchat, diverting demand away from traditional channels.
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- Where appropriate, we will advise customers they can complete transactions online and advice customers when they are in the queue.
- We will replace our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) with Microsoft Dynamics offering better back office connection of business processes and personal productivity.
- We will be improving Wi-Fi connectivity in all council public spaces
- We will encourage smart working practices to avoid duplication
- We will Improve our on-line access channels for simple transactions
- We will develop digital platforms and tools that allow 24/7 access for customers
- We will use customer feedback to measure each customer access channel to identify areas of improvement
- We will Investigate joint back-office systems and data sharing with partners to make customer journey planning easier and improve processes

⁴ Southwark's Digital Strategy Equality Analysis 2016

Our Journey so far

Our key achievements delivered since the 2012/2020 strategies;

Since moving our services to a single in-house Contact Centre and switchboard at Queens Road we have achieved £4.5m in savings. Our service points moved to an appointment only system, we reduced the number of service points from three to two; we closed cash offices and moved payment services online.

We redesigned our website through which most services can now be accessed. We promoted and encouraged self service with over 100,000 My Southwark registered accounts and made repairs services available online.

In our Housing Solutions service we introduced DocuSign to prepare and manage tenancies and agreements with customers and landlords. This has been beneficial during the Covid-19 reducing the risk of spreading infection and supports social distancing guidelines and better user experience for our customers.

Housing on-line advice form developed giving our customers 24/7 access to our services and the ability to upload documents securely reducing waiting and travel time to our Bournemouth Road office.

We extended our Telecare Assisted Living (SMART) monitoring and response to Lambeth residents. We are delivering this service on behalf of the Lambeth Council.

We now have 50,000 residents using our online resident's services portal.

Our focus has been on creating online services that are fully end to end and we successfully transitioned all waste services to this model. We transitioned Estate Parking and Pest Control and Registrars went live early 2020.

Homeowner improvement project

We have also engaged extensively recently with our homeowner population as part of the Homeowner improvement project. A large group of homeowners met to describe in detail their perceptions and examples of poor service delivery. This was welcomed by the group and a commitment was made to provide further opportunities for engagement and listening in the future as part of the homeowner improvement plan.

We delivered a new telephony system (8*8) providing improved reporting and monitoring, and ability for web-chat.

We upgraded our Housing self-serve portal, accessed via My Southwark accounts offering a fully responsive service on smaller screens, employer online reporting tool, with real-time appointment booking functionality.

Digital Inclusion

The Technology Transformation Team have set up a cross-council digital inclusion working group and are developing a digital inclusion action plan for 2021/2022.

This includes digital inclusion training for residents and volunteer digital champions. For updates please contact shade.nathaniel-ayodele@southwark.gov.uk

In response to COVID-19 and impact on services Southwark Contact Centre

Since lockdown in March 2020, our Contact Centre has been running the council's Covid-19 hub enquiry and support. This vital service was set up very quickly by Contact Centre managers who worked closely with our Communities division in Housing and Modernisation who corporately lead the Covid-19 response hub.

Resident Services

We established on-line forums using Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This has allowed our residents to continue to provide feedback and input into ongoing council plans.

Under our digital infrastructure programme we have over 30,000 council properties that have a full-fibre connection offering gigabit-fast connectivity to residents on our estates.

Libraries

Southwark has a network of 12 libraries with excellent geographical coverage from Borough High Street in the North to Kingswood House in the South. Since COVID-19 our libraries have been closed. Once restrictions have been lifted our libraries will reopen with four of our libraries opening on Sundays, ensuring seven days a week access to services.

Community hubs

The vision for prevention in adult social care (ASC) was to develop community hubs across Southwark. These hubs are now available offering resident's new ways to connect with community groups and local organisations. Support for carers is a 'golden' thread central to the model of ensuring carers can now effectively access a range of interventions.

Our Well-being Hub now acts as the 'front door' to ASC Mental Health services.

Accreditations

We have been awarded White Ribbon, Customer Service Experience (CSE) and HQN accredit lettings accreditation.

In July 2020, we were awarded the Telecare Standard Accreditation (TSA) for our assisted living service, (SMART), recognising the service excellence for

Southwark Council customers. The service has since been extended to the Lambeth Council adding 2,300 connections to our already 3,200 vulnerable residents.

We have retained our Investors in people 'Gold' status award. Keeping our 'Gold' status is a huge achievement highlighting our success as an organisation and as an employee, whilst also highlighting where we can improve.

We have retained our Customer Service Excellence award for a further three years.

Our Customer Service Standards

We want to ensure we continue to deliver good customer services, our commitments to you are:

- We will be easy to contact and do business with and want to provide a service which is accessible and available, so you can use our on-line services and view the latest information at a time and place convenient to you.
- We will make sure that alternate access, such as a telephone service, is in place for the people who really need it, such as emergency situations and the most vulnerable customers.
- The staff you deal with will be knowledgeable, polite and respectful and they will give you their name and take responsibility for helping you or will find someone who can.
- Our aim is to say 'yes' but we will be clear and straightforward where we can't help, and where possible we will point you in the right direction of someone who can.
- We will deal with you as efficiently and quickly as we can or we will do our best to develop, online services which can get it right, first time
- We will continually improve, ensuring that our services represent good value for money for residents, keeping resources focused on service delivery and we will keep up with the development of new technology so that you can access services in the modern ways you want.
- We will treat you fairly, with courtesy and respect and communicate with you in a clear and honest way, giving you the right information for you to make choices.
- Where you have a problem, we will listen to you and properly understand the issue and value your feedback and we will use your comments and complaints to improve our services for the future.

Next Steps

The Customer Access Strategy 2020 to 2024 will be supported by a detailed implementation plan aligned to our Council plan, Digital first and Infrastructure strategies.

We will develop Customer Experience Policy and a Customer Charter focusing on improving Council's responsiveness to customers, improve accountability and embed customer experience principles in our daily culture.

Action plans beyond 2021 will be developed providing a framework for managing and tracking progress where customer experience will be measured and where customers will be able to stay informed of our progress through regular reports and will be able to provide ongoing feedback through future consultations.

References

Southwark A fairer future

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future>

Southwark Council Plan

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/council-plan>

Southwark Digital Strategy

<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s59719/Appendix%201%20Southwarks%20Digital%20Strategy.pdf>

Southwark Stands Together

<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/tag/southwark-stands-together/>

Southwark Modernise Strategy

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/business/modernise-strategy>

Southwark Digital Strategy Equality & Health Analysis

<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s59721/Appendix%203%20Southwarks%20Digital%20Strategy%20Equality%20and%20Health%20Analysis.pdf>

Libraries

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries>

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