

# Channel Shift

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# Terms of reference

**“How we provide improved and more cost effective customer access to council services through use of Channel Shift.”**

# Definitions

## **Channel:**

A method of contact (or delivery), e.g. face-to-face, phone, email, website.

## **Channel Shift:**

Getting customers to change from a more expensive method of contact (channel) to a cheaper more efficient one.

# Context

- Channel shift – encouraging customers to move from traditional (9 to 5) contact methods to digital (24/7) contact methods.
- Digital – provides cheaper and more effective service delivery.
- Delivering savings depends on numerous things: support; consistency, simplicity, results, satisfaction and culture change.
- We must recognise and accommodate customer's needs and abilities.

# Why digital?

- Part of the Government's ambition to move from centralised government to local delivery.
- A growing number of customers expect to be able to access what they want 24/7 via phones, tablets & PCs.  
*The "Amazon" experience.*
- Access changes quickly – phone calls to emails to on-line forms to on-line accounts.
- Self-service has given way to assisted service.
- Success stories prove this can work in local govt.
- Front office **and** back office savings.
- And so on.

# Success stories

- Reporting a pot hole – elsewhere.
- Signing up for direct debit or reporting a change of address for council tax here at Dudley now.

# Transaction Costs

Many different estimates but these are typical:

- Face-to-face: £7.40 - £8.62.
- Phone: £2.82 - £2.90.
- Email - £??
- Website: £0.05 - £0.32.



# Achieving Channel Shift

- The key to achieving channel shift is simply to provide a user experience that outperforms other channels; when faced with choice, the customer chooses the digital option.
- If we get it wrong, the customer will go back to the more expensive channels - phone/face-to-face contacts.

# *Where are we?*

- Some other councils are ahead of us.
- Piecemeal approach so far, with some good examples.
- Deciding on what we want the customer experience to look like.
- In need of a responsive, transactional website.
- New ICT Strategy 2015-2019 being developed.

# Actions

- Commence work in line with the ICT Strategy.
- Identify software provider & procure services / product(s).
- Work on culture change.
- Ensure we have enough channels and the right ones.
- Ensure the channels work as efficiently as possible.
- Encourage customers to use the most efficient channel for the task.

# Council Plan 2015/16

OBJECTIVE: Increase access to Council services by increasing digital service options to citizens.

## KEY ACTIONS/INITIATIVES:

- New corporate ICT strategy 2015 -19 based on council priorities, transformation and the digital agenda.
- Implement a modern and responsive website that increases the number of transactions and is designed around serving people via any channel.
- Implement a Customer Portal incorporating customer relationship functionality.
- Expand and enhance Council digital services and the Council website to support customer focused delivery and encourage the use of online services.
- Ensure other means of accessing council services are available for those who find it unreasonably difficult to use digital means.

# Council Plan (cont.)

- Introduce GOV.UK Verify to improve online identity verification so that customers can use Council services safely.
- Implement Public wifi in Council venues across the borough.
- Alongside individual elector registration (IER) online, elections staff to complete online registration for customers who visit or contact by telephone, acknowledging that fewer older or disabled people have internet access.
- Promote and support people to go online and access digital services via library services

# Request to Scrutiny Committee

To challenge and act as a sounding board as our strategy and approach develop to ensure we're travelling in the right direction and:

- That our strategies and plans will be successful in realising a shift to digitally enabled access to services, meeting the needs of all communities.
- That our strategies support traditional channels where appropriate.
- That our approach achieves the required savings whilst ensuring ongoing investment in service delivery.