



Customer Experience Strategy

2022 | 2024

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Section 1 – Introduction

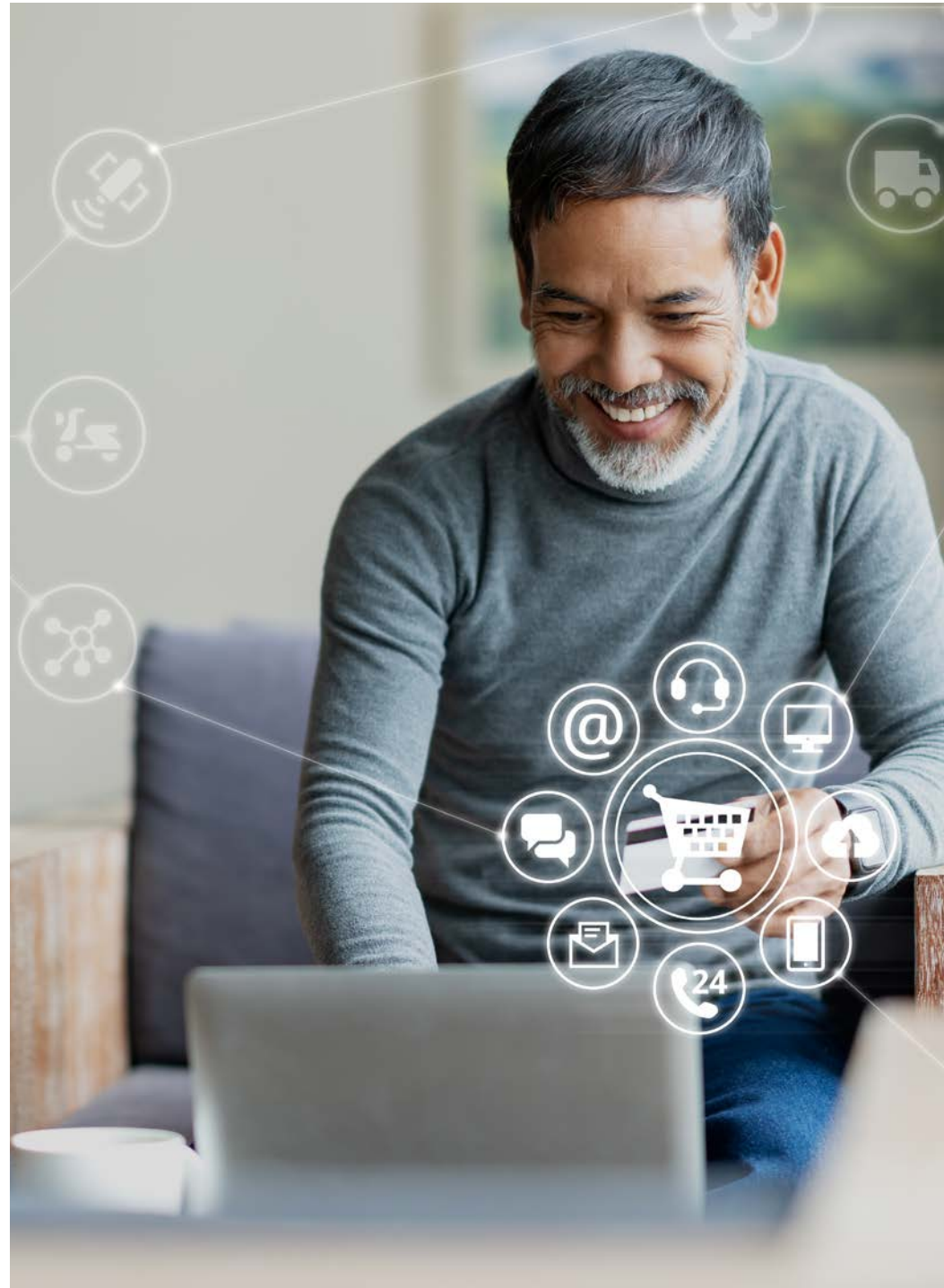
Foreword by the Assistant Director for IT and Digital

In the UK, cash payments have now been overtaken by cashless transactions, online access is primarily via smart phone, and across the UK 90% of adults are now regular internet users, with the figure growing. This means that the way we offer our services is changing, with an increasing emphasis on transacting digitally in fewer physical locations. This is not only driven by environmental factors such as resource availability but also by our customers' expectations of how we utilise technology in the changing environment we live in.

We recognise that not everyone can use or has access to the right technology. Therefore, whilst we will continue to develop our digital solutions, we will also ensure that all our services are accessible to all communities, ensuring that the digitally excluded have the same access to services.

The Council is here for vulnerable people in society who need us the most and is committed to delivering the best outcomes for the diverse range of people living and working in Worcestershire, helping ensure our residents are healthier, live longer and have a better quality of life.

Success will mean that all communities will know how to contact us and access our services, will find an excellent experience when they need us, will have clear expectations, and receive timely updates. Improved customer service works for the Council by reducing duplicate calls, avoidable contact, complaints and repeat contacts, enabling us to concentrate our resource where they are needed most.



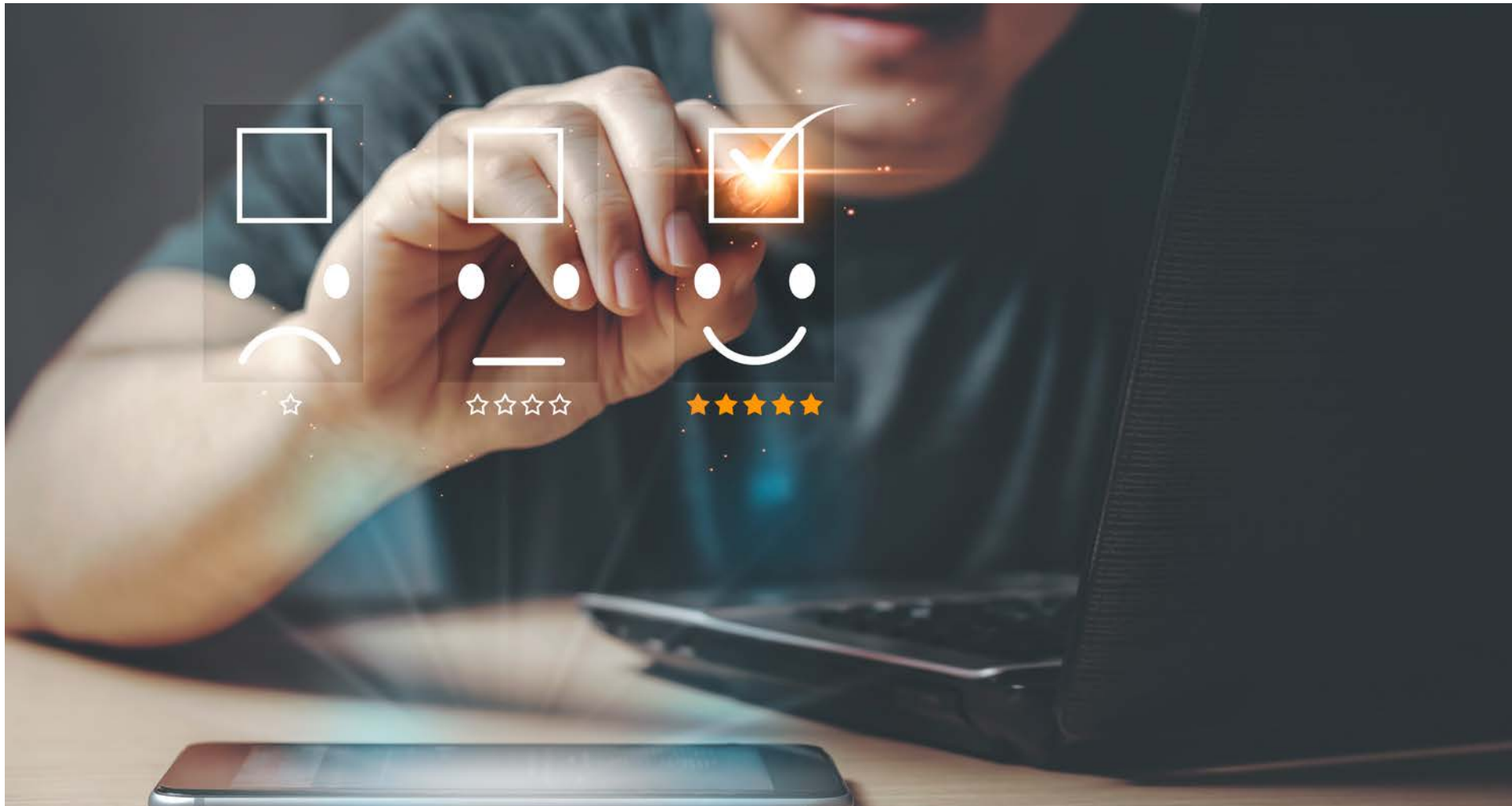
Purpose

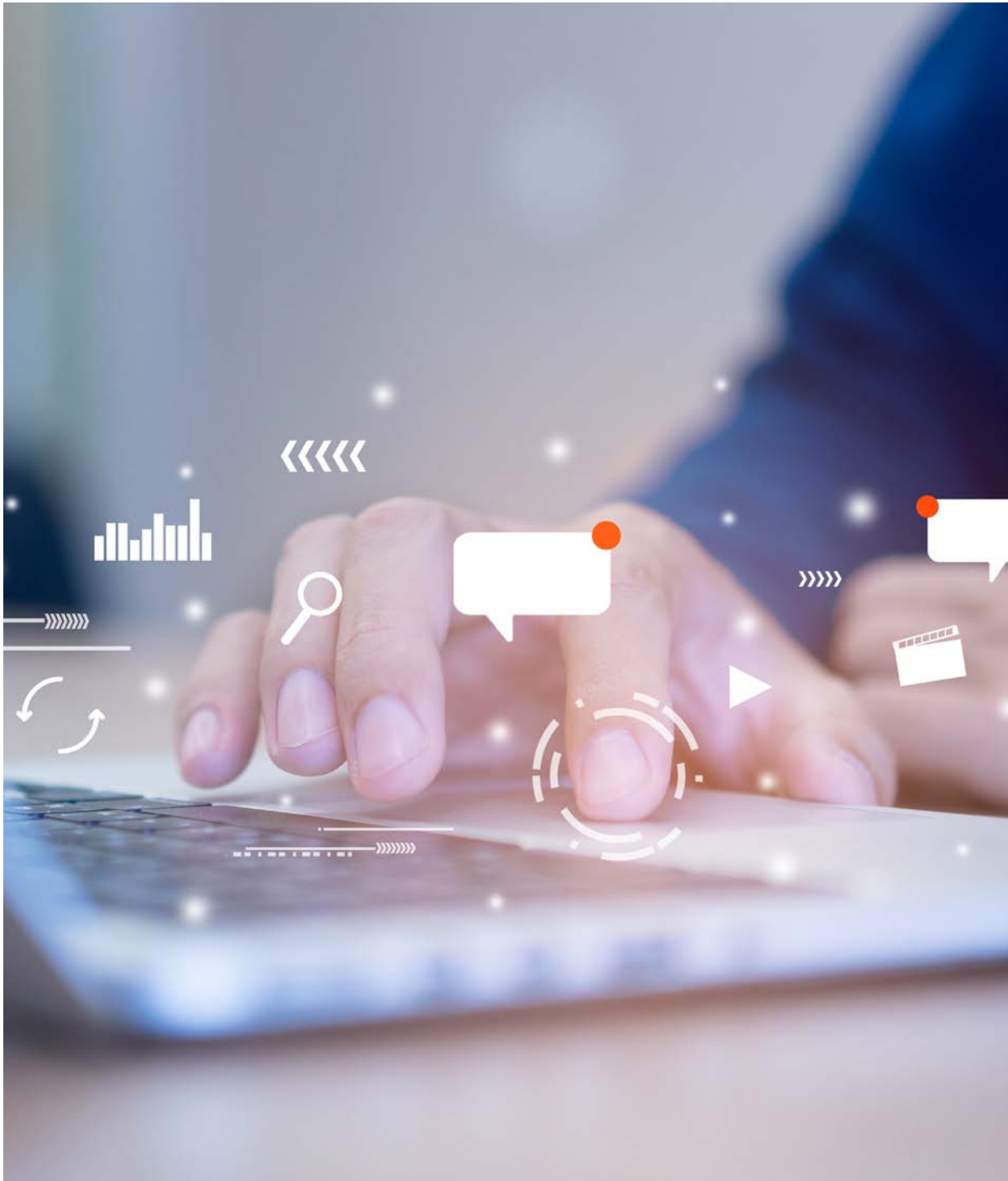
This Customer Experience Strategy for 2022-2024 sets out our vision to achieve a step change in the customer experience the Council delivers to its customers.

This document has been drawn up in consultation with senior managers across the Council, under guidance from the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change and informed by the Corporate Plan. This has determined what currently works well,

where there are problems, and what technology and systems are required for the future. The consultation identified much strength in what we already do as a Council and an ambition to deliver services in ways that match customer expectation.

The delivery of this Strategy will fall under the overall control of the Chief Executive. Progress on the implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Customer Experience Board.





Executive summary

Customer Experience refers not just to the services the Council provides but also how customers are treated when they are trying to access those services. As a public service provider, it is important that customers can trust the Council to design services which respond to their needs and the needs of the local area and that these are delivered in a way which provides value for their money.

Digital customer service is not just about technology, it's about having practices and processes which are simple and work. It is about having the appropriate technology which meets the needs of both internal and external users, supports business processes, and is secure, flexible and simple to use, and having the right organisational culture in place which supports and encourages staff to optimise the use of digital to meet the needs of customers.

Today's customers expect customer service that is high quality, available 24/7 and in the channel most convenient to them. In a world where the answer to nearly anything and the ability to buy nearly anything is just a click or tap away, customer patience is an extremely limited resource. Customer service demands have therefore evolved with a move away from phone to other digital (self-service) methods, with an expectation of personalisation, self-service and interconnected channels.



Linked strategies and programmes

The Customer Experience Strategy has been written to align with and complement our national, organisational and partner strategies to deliver a whole Council approach, as listed below:

- ◆ UK Digital Strategy
- ◆ National Data Strategy
- ◆ Building Digital UK (BDUK)
- ◆ Corporate Plan - Shaping Worcestershire's Future
- ◆ Strategic Economic Plan / Local Industrial Strategy
- ◆ Digital Strategy 2021-2023
- ◆ IT Strategy 2021-2023
- ◆ Data Management & Insight Strategy 2021-2023
- ◆ Information Governance Strategy 2021-2023
- ◆ Adults Digital Strategy
- ◆ Highways & Transport Strategy
- ◆ Worcestershire Library Strategy
- ◆ Hereford & Worcestershire Sustainability Transformation Partnership Digital Strategy
- ◆ Integrated Care for Older People in Worcestershire Strategy
- ◆ Smart and Green - Green Alliance

In addition to the Customer Experience Programme the Council has several cross cutting organisational transformation programmes currently in progress or in the early stages of development:

- ◆ Digital Transformation Programme
- ◆ Social Care Case Management Phase 2
- ◆ Economy and Infrastructure Technology Programme
- ◆ People Technology Programme
- ◆ Worcestershire Children's First Technology Programme
- ◆ Digital Skills Programme (Public Health)
- ◆ Sustainable Transformation Partnership

Section 2 - Where are we now

The journey so far

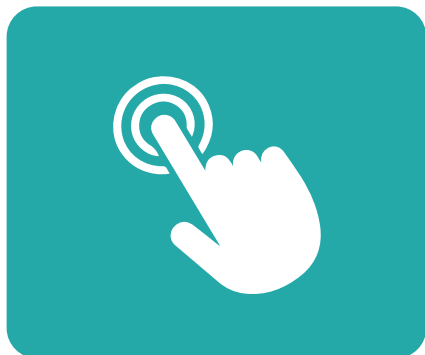
The Re-imagined front doors project was established in 2019 following the insourcing of the Customer Services Contact Centre. The outcomes of the Re-imagined front door project led to the creation of the Customer Experience Programme and associated board which is chaired by the Chief Executive.

The ambition of the programme is to transform the way in which customers access services and information, and improve the end-to-end customer journey, including enabling as much service delivery as possible through self-service. The Council wants residents, communities, and visitors to feel empowered to find their own solutions, and to feel supported and connected.

As a result of this programme customers will not only have simple access across a choice of channels to services, also a more consistent and improved way of how the Council meets customer needs with more requests being completed at the first point of contact.

Having the most up to date information, guidance and self-help tools available at customers fingertips will help them to be able to self-refer and self-support.

The way that we deliver Customer Services has changed at pace in recent years and reflects the changes in the environment at large. This includes:



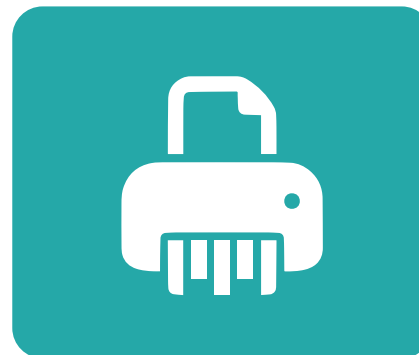
Resilience

Resilience through giving our contact centre advisors the ability to work remotely, reducing the likelihood of the Council being difficult to contact



Digital

Increased use of technology to simplify 'report it' type transactions through use of maps, chatbots, and web chat to allow people to fulfil online



Simplification

Simplification of our web content to better reflect customer expectations and accessibility requirements



Support

Support to front-line staff to give them the confidence to have conversations with people to really understand how best to support them

We recognise there are still areas for improvement, and the strategy sets out our outcomes and objectives designed to help us do that. This is in the context of a challenging financial position in future years, and while we will seek to improve quality and reduce cost.

Our key challenges



Reducing council resources

The need for us to provide high quality customer service does not go away as our funding reduces. We need to develop more cost-effective ways for our customers to contact us and encourage and support our customers to use them. We need to find ways to be clearer about what we can and can't do so that there is transparency and to better manage customer expectations.



Increased demand and funding cuts

The Council is facing the twin challenge of unprecedented cuts to funding and increasing demand on its services. Additional cost pressures in respect of inflation and increases in the demand for services such as the extra numbers of people needing social care.



Digital exclusion

Some people don't have access to the internet at home, or have specific accessibility needs, and that may mean that they can't find our information and services online. We need to find ways to help these customers by providing equipment and support at venues across the county, as well as working in partnership with local digital inclusion charities.



Rising customer expectations

Customers expect to be able to access services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using the Council's website and social media for relevant services. They expect flexible and more personalised services.



Equality of access

Our county's communities are changing and becoming increasingly diverse. As a Council we work hard to understand our communities and the barriers to access and support needs people may have. Knowing this enables us to provide responsive services that better anticipate all customers' needs and respond respectfully, appropriately and efficiently.



Omnichannel Experience

Seamless customer journey across all front doors without duplication or redirection. Offering a fully integrated experience that connects physical sites, mobile apps, websites and more, to reach more customers in more effective ways.

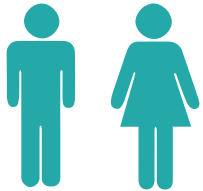
Understanding our area and people

With an estimated population of around 598,000, Worcestershire is a large and very beautiful rural county placed at the heart of England, stretching from the outskirts of Birmingham down to the edge of the Cotswolds.

The County is home to more tech and digital businesses than any other area in the country. Malvern Hills' Cyber Valley is a real hotspot for digital innovation and is so named for good reason. It is home to the biggest cluster of cyber security firms outside of London.

In contrast to this Worcestershire is a center for tourism with a significant number of historical houses, museums, hotels spread around the county, including of course the popular West Midland Safari Park.

Worcestershire is a prosperous area where residents have high expectations for good quality services. However, we also have areas of significant deprivation within our communities where customers rely on us to provide the support they need.



50.88% are female and **49.12%** are male

29,210 businesses (2021)



598,100 residents (2020) **63,685 residents are unpaid carers** with **13,718** providing at least 50 hours care a week (2011)



16 million visitors each year (2017-2019)



269,000 jobs (2020)



92.4% of residents classed themselves as White British (2011)



10,110 Students (University of Worcester Higher Education, 2020/21)



At **23%** the 65 and over population is larger than average. This is forecast to grow to **28%** of the population **by 2043**

79.1% employment rate higher than regional and national average. Below average wages



242,600 households (2019)



3.4% of households have members for whom **English is not the main language.** **1.7% of households** having **no members with English as their main language**



17.9% of residents have a long-term health condition or disability (2011)



Our current customer experience

Delivering services to local businesses and resident and enabling people to access information, is a significant part of our core purpose. The following information about customers and customer transactions gives a flavour of the services delivered by the Council.



2,757,610 new and returning customers visited our website in 2021



4000 highways and transport enquires each month (2021)



63% visits to our websites are **via mobile devices**

2.61m visits to Worcestershire libraries in 2019/20



Face to face services at 21 libraries, 2 volunteer run library links and a mobile library



Followers in Dec' 2021



42,078 Twitter



11,379 LinkedIn



23,438 Facebook



4475 Instagram



12,648 Family front Door referrals during 2021



445,735 online enquiries during 2021



31.8m social media views in 2021.
430,000 Council videos viewed

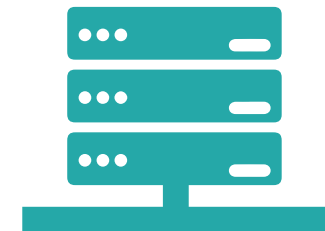
6,688 requests for service for Early Help



13884 chatbot
1174 Webchat enquiries (2021)



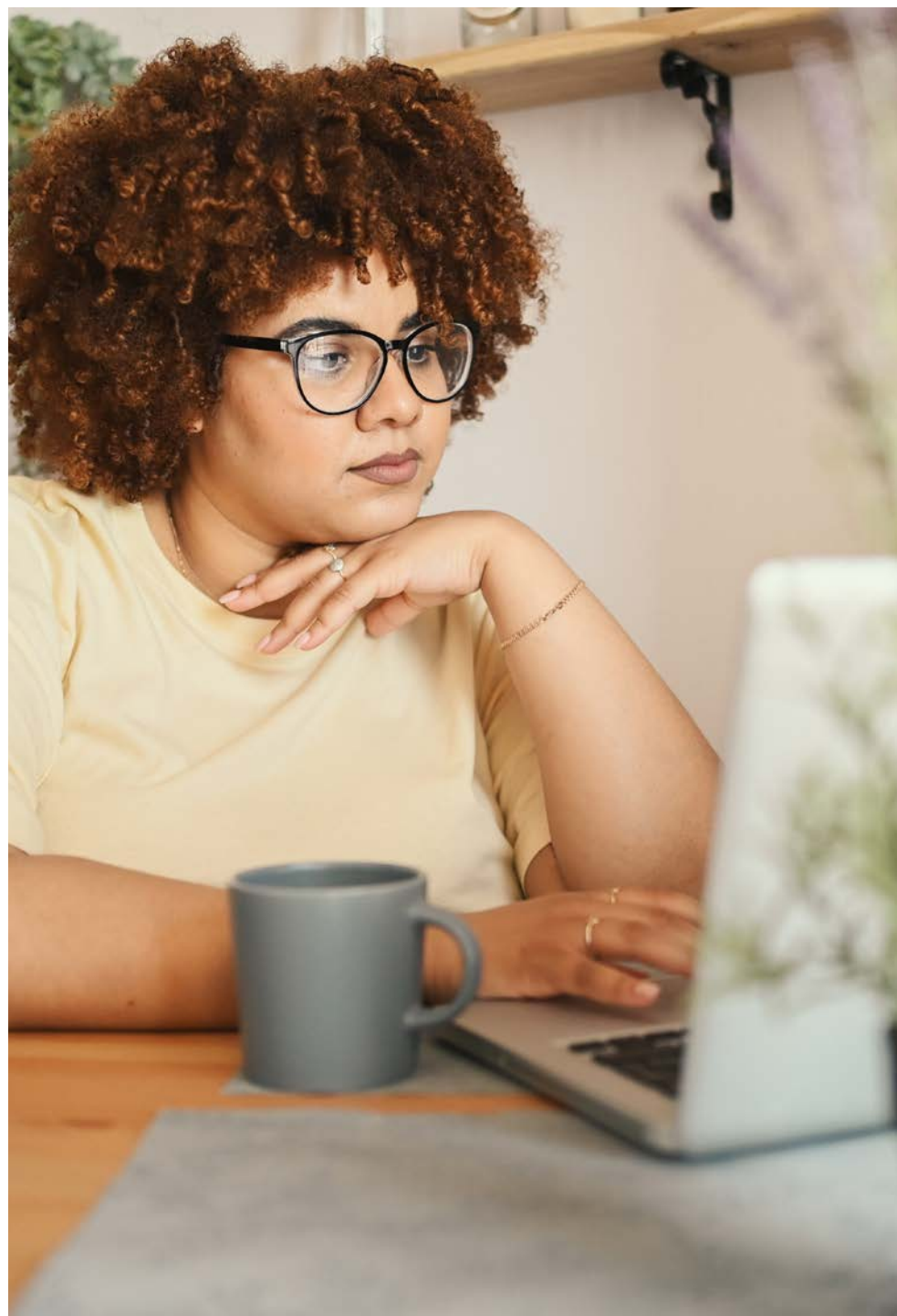
50% of transactions now made online via the Council's digital systems



Co-design and engagement

Capturing customers' knowledge about usage and need is key to innovation and successful service redesign focused on customers and their experiences. For improvements to Customer Experience to be a success, it is essential that all groups involved in the change are engaged with to gain their views of what customer experience should look like in the future. This will build and sustain connected communities, lead to improved outcomes, ensure access and community empowerment. The following engagement has been undertaken:

- ◆ Worcestershire Viewpoint Citizens' Panel is a resident panel for research and consultation. Any Worcestershire resident aged 18 or over can join the panel to have their say on local public services. Panel members complete an annual survey to track views on the local area and Council services and may be invited to take part in other research and consultation activities through the year.
- ◆ Workforce engagement: Hearing the views of the workforce through workshops, drop-in sessions and involvement in the design and testing of new approaches.
- ◆ Resident focus group: A Worcestershire Resident Focus Group has been established, to share their ideas and views of the future Here2Help Service and Customer Experience Programme.
- ◆ Partners and organisations: The Council's partners have been invited to get involved in the changes and how this will affect them.
- ◆ Worcestershire residents were engaged with as part of the website redevelopment project through existing viewpoint volunteers, the website itself, as well as social media channels.



Section 3 - Where we want to be

Our vision

“To harness people, process and technology to create an outstanding experience across all channels that is recognised and valued by our customers”.

Our customer promise

We will make it easy to contact us or access services

- ◆ Designed our customer access points around the needs of our residents, visitors and businesses
- ◆ Where digital access is not appropriate, we will offer alternative ways to contact us or access services

We will be efficient and value for money

- ◆ Delivering services in the most cost-effective and value-added way

We will understand and get things done

- ◆ Aim to answer your query at point of first contact
- ◆ Understand and respond appropriately to your needs
- ◆ Achieve the right outcome without repeat referrals and the need for you to chase

We will be accountable

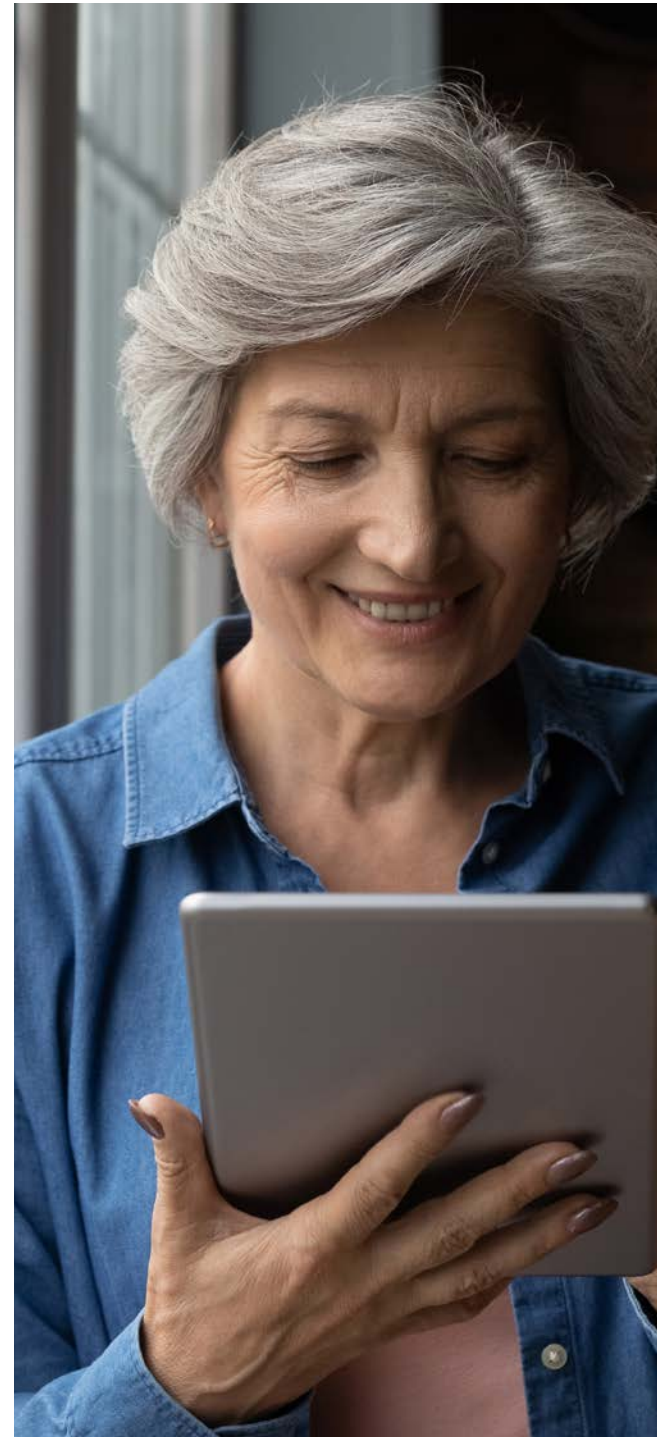
- ◆ Follow-up on commitments quickly and properly
- ◆ Deliver services in a way that is clear and understood by you

We will be clear

- ◆ Use plain English in all our communications
- ◆ Adhere to accessibility standards
- ◆ Communicate with you digitally where appropriate

We treat you with respect

- ◆ Never compromise the safety of those for whom we are providing services
- ◆ Meeting our statutory obligations



Section 4 – Our customer experience priorities

Priority 1 – Easily Accessible

Information and services will be available to, accessible to, and usable by, the broadest audience possible, in a sustainable manner, through broad organisational buy-in and a culture of inclusion.

- ◆ Information available online is up to date, effective and easily accessible
- ◆ Maximise access to all services according to customer need, using both direct and indirect access to services
- ◆ Person-centred, holistic approach to meeting people's needs.
- ◆ Services efficiently provided and delivered in a cost-effective way
- ◆ Easily accessible, transparent and inclusive
- ◆ Offering a joined-up experience across all channels for all residents
- ◆ More transactions completed at first point of contact
- ◆ End to end visibility of transaction status for both the service and the customer
- ◆ To establish a single view of the resident or business across technology platforms, utilise OutSystems as the application programme interface (API) to deliver a summary view
- ◆ Assess location needs based on workspace, public engagement, economic development and access to information





Priority 2 – Digital by Choice

Using modern technologies to enable digital opportunity, fundamentally improving how we serve our customers and communities.

- ◆ Innovative use of technology to enhance digital accessibility
- ◆ Increased opportunity for customers to self-serve
- ◆ Delivering a seamless digital experience for the customer
- ◆ Promoting independence and wellbeing through use of digital services and technology.
- ◆ A fully digitally enabled council that provides personalised content based on customer interactions
- ◆ An exemplar of delivering an excellent digital customer experience with most of the customer contact via our self-service channels
- ◆ Streamlining the delivery of our services so they can be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible

Priority 3 – Simplicity and Clarity

Simple streamlined processes designed with the customer at heart for easy access.

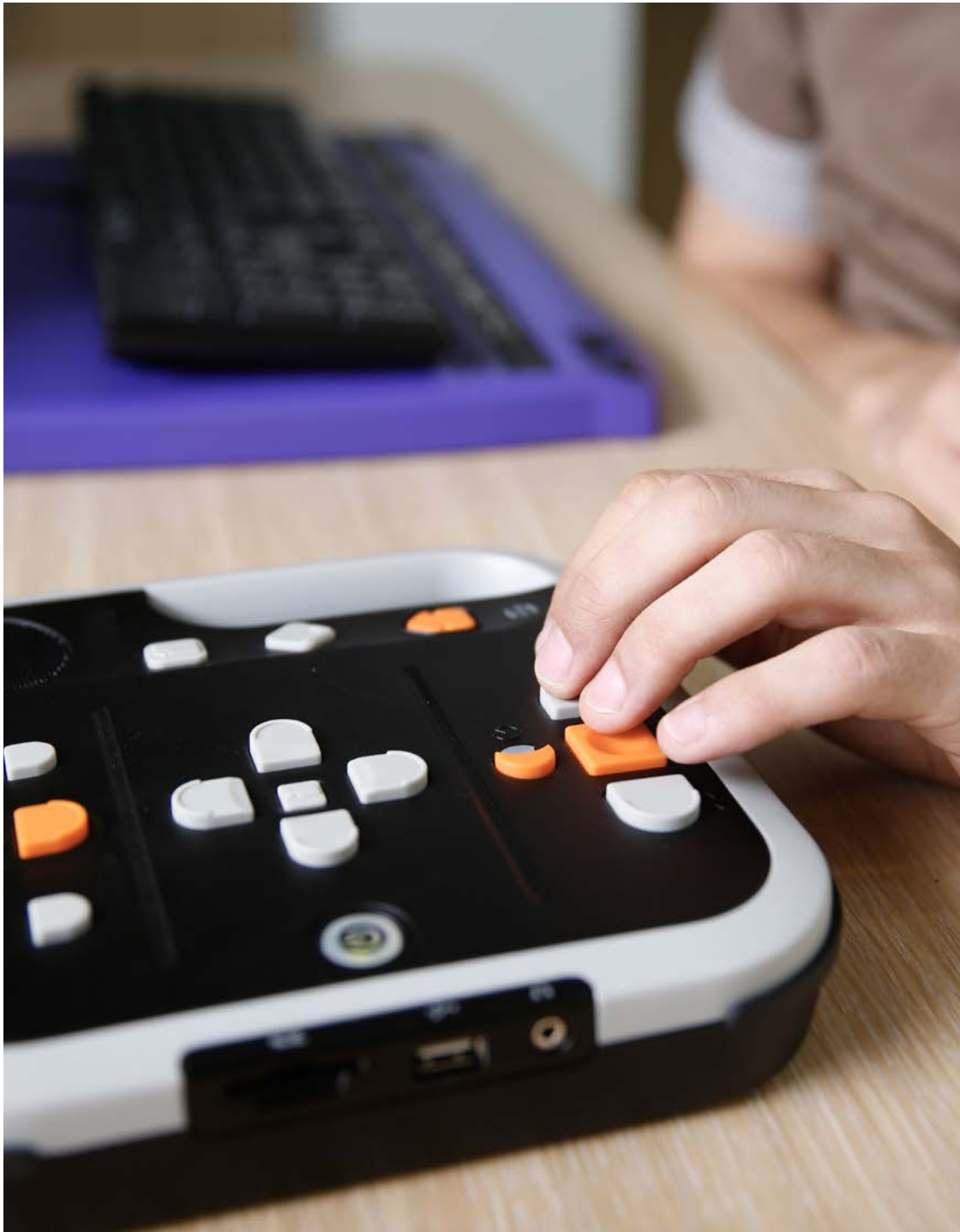
- ◆ Clear guidance on where and how to access service
- ◆ Ownership of queries and transactions
- ◆ Streamline services and remove duplication and redirection
- ◆ Redesign ineffective channels of contact and transacting
- ◆ Consolidate services around defined service groups with an agreed outcome that meet the customer need and not individual service obligation.
- ◆ Close services no longer in use or being delivered by others
- ◆ Consolidate all contact centre technologies onto a standard enterprise level platform and deploy across all existing contact centre services

Priority 4 – Listen and Improve Standards

Engaging with the community to listen to what they want from our services.

- ◆ Designing our services from a customer perspective.
- ◆ Set and enforce standards for the common aspects of customer service delivery corporately; and set standards for the specialist aspects of service delivery
- ◆ Actively seek feedback and make improvements across all our access channels
- ◆ Apply common performance standards across all our access channels based on what customers feel is important.
- ◆ Make performance data easily available
- ◆ Service redesign the contact centres to consolidate once and done services for efficiency and improved customer experience.
- ◆ Ensure customer feedback is captured to allow for continuous service improvements
- ◆ Create a professional standard for customer services, where the skills and competencies of staff can be developed
- ◆ Ensure customer services staff are proactive, knowledgeable, empowered
- ◆ Design the organisation of customer services around people's needs, not internal structures
- ◆ Use local knowledge and information to deliver services effectively
- ◆ Set a minimum quality standard that all people can expect from the Council, and encourage specialist services to exceed this to improve customer satisfaction and outcomes





Priority 5 – Inclusive Access

Ensure the right channels are made available for services, based on customer capability, reach and most efficient methods of delivery.

- ◆ Respect privacy and dignity
- ◆ Tackling digital exclusion head on
- ◆ A human touch for people that need it
- ◆ Accessibility at the heart of all our services
- ◆ A recognition that digital isn't for everyone and non-digital access to services will be available

Priority 6 – Right First Time

Standardise and consolidate our technology platforms by channel, ensuring they can deliver on a right first time or once and done basis.

- ◆ Ensure all digital services deliver an end-to-end experience, not part way there
- ◆ Automate information giving services through voice and digital capabilities, including digital points of presence
- ◆ Categorise Council services as once and done or right first time in baseline assessment
- ◆ Meet needs at first point of contact
- ◆ Empower customers and give them choice of access to services
- ◆ Reduce unnecessary contact caused by service failure
- ◆ Map out customer journeys and ensure they are streamlined from the customer perspective
- ◆ Our officers will own customer contact

Section 5 – Delivering change, monitoring progress and measuring success

Resourcing the delivery

Funding for the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2024 will be incorporated within revenue budgets and capital programme and drawn down based on costed business cases.

Agreed funding has been identified within the WCC Service Redesign Business Cases for Adult Social Care and Libraries of approximately £535K of investment being spread over 3 financial years. The investment is estimated to be split between the existing People Services Capital Programme Provision and existing Here2Help reserve funding.

Additional funding for other service areas would be drawn down based on costed business cases. Additional resources and investment may also be required if the pace of delivery required by the business is greater than our current delivery capacity.

Implementation and reporting progress

It is essential we monitor progress and ensure that the work we are doing is delivering a tangible difference to our staff, members, residents, visitors, communities and businesses of Worcestershire. Therefore, this strategy will be supported by a robust implementation plan which will evidence the delivery of our priorities and will set out key milestones and achievements.

Progress in implementing the strategy and delivery plan will be reported to the Customer Experience Programme Board. Progress will be reported to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication on a periodic basis, with the opportunity for ad-hoc progress reports as required.



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