

Customer Access Strategy: Year 1 delivery update – Quarter 1

We are working to make council services easier to access, simpler to use and more responsive to customer needs. This Quarter 1 update shows how the first year of the Customer Access Strategy is moving from planning into practical improvements, with a focus on better communication, improved digital journeys, inclusive support and stronger use of customer feedback.

Overview

- Six priority areas progressed during Quarter 1
- New translation service introduced to improve language support
- Customer feedback routes expanded through the website
- Online forms and digital journeys under review, including new forms
- Customer Access Point review underway to support accessible services

More details about each priority area:

Keeping customers better informed

Why this matters:

Customers should know what is happening with their enquiry, what to expect next and when it has been resolved.

What has happened so far:

- Initial review of current customer update processes completed
- Early scoping undertaken for improved notifications and communication journeys

What happens next:

- Start introducing improved update mechanisms that give customers clearer and more timely information
- Identify priority service areas where improved communication will have the greatest customer impact

Making online services easier to use

Why this matters:

Online services should be simple, intuitive and consistent, with new forms designed well from the start.

What has happened so far:

- Programme of work established to review key existing forms, new forms and related online processes
- High-level identification of improvement opportunities underway with forms in some areas already improved

What happens next:

- Progress work to simplify journeys, improve usability and support a digital-by-choice approach

Review digital signatures capabilities

Why this matters:

Digital tools can make services quicker and easier to complete by reducing paper, avoidable steps and delays.

What has happened so far:

- Initial exploration of digital signature capability completed
- Scope being defined for where implementation will add value

What happens next:

- Identify priority forms/services for introduction
- Begin phased implementation where appropriate, ensuring multi-channel access

Listening to customers and acting on feedback

Why this matters:

Customer feedback helps us understand what is working well, where things need to improve and how services can better meet people's needs.

What has happened so far:

- Monthly performance and feedback review processes implemented
- Customer user group sign-up now available via the website

What happens next:

- Introduce additional feedback mechanisms, including mystery shopping.

Improving access for people who need additional support

Why this matters:

Some customers need in-person support or assisted self-service, so the Customer Access Point needs to reflect demand, accessibility and the right level of help.

What has happened so far:

- Initial assessment of current operating model commenced
- Early review of customer needs and service delivery approach underway

What happens next:

- Continue review and options development

- Align future model with customer demand and accessibility needs

Providing better language support

Why this matters:

Effective translation support helps customers understand information, supports inclusion and gives staff the tools to communicate clearly when language support is needed.

What has happened so far:

- A new translation service has been implemented with improved access to language support, helping staff communicate more effectively with customers, support inclusion and accessibility, improve customer understanding and deliver better value for money

What happens next:

- User feedback has been very positive but we will continue with ongoing monitoring of service quality.

Summary of Quarter 1

Quarter 1 has focused on building the foundations for delivery. Programmes of work are now in place across the Year 1 priority areas, helping us move towards services that are easier to access, clearer to navigate, inclusive by design and shaped by customer insight.

Our main focus has been on:

- Scoping and planning improvements that support the Year 1 delivery goals
- Putting governance and review mechanisms in place so progress can be tracked and acted on
- Beginning service and process reviews that will lead to more practical, customer-focused improvements

Some of the specific changes already implemented

Improvement implemented	Service Area	Customer or service benefit
Assistance with downloading bank statements	Housing and Revenues & Benefits	Information added to website to guide customers through the process of downloading bank statements when they are required to provide these. Assistance is also provided over the telephone or in person.
Case status updates	Abandoned vehicles	Automatic updates are sent to customers when the status of their case is changed. Next priority areas to be identified.

Report it functions available outside of MyAccount	Noise complaints	Supports simpler customer journeys. Next priority areas to be identified.
Kent Homechoice letter/email templates reviewed	Housing	Clearer, more informative correspondence.
Building Control letter/email templates reviewed	Building Control	Clearer, more informative correspondence.
Customer user group sign-up made available via the website	Customer feedback and insight	Gives customers a direct route to contribute views and help shape future service improvements.
Initial assessment of the Customer Access Point operating model commenced	Customer Access Point	Supports development of an access model that better reflects customer demand, accessibility needs and assisted self-service.
New translation service implemented	Language support services	Improves access to language support, strengthens inclusion and accessibility, and helps staff communicate more effectively with customers.

Quarter 2 Priorities

In Quarter 2, we will build on this foundation and move further into delivery, including:

- Roll out of enhanced customer updates and notifications
- Progressing detailed service and form reviews, including any new forms
- Expanding feedback and insight activity so customer experience continues to shape improvements
- Continuing the Customer Access Point review
- Beginning rollout of staff training programmes

Our commitment

Through the Customer Access Strategy, we remain committed to services that are:

- Easy to access, simple to use and clear to understand
- Available through the right mix of digital, telephone and in-person channels
- Responsive to different customer needs, including those who need additional support
- Continuously improved through feedback, insight and performance information

Keeping you updated

We will continue to publish quarterly updates so residents, customers and staff can see how the Year 1 action plan is progressing and how improvements are being delivered.