

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	
Date:	12 <sup>th</sup> December 2011	Status	Open
Category	2. Decision within the functions of Executive		
Subject:	Channel Strategy 2011-2013		
Report by:	Head of Customer Service and Performance		
Other Officers Involved	Extended Management Team. Chief Executive's and Partnership Manager. Head of Democratic Services. Head of Joint ICT. Various Officers in CSPD.		
Director	CEO		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Leader		

### **RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS**

The Channel Strategy contributes to the following corporate plan aims:

**CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICES** – Providing excellent customer focused services

**SOCIAL INCLUSION** – Promoting fairness, equality and lifelong learning.

### **TARGETS**

It is specifically related to the following target:

Design services to meet the needs of customers

- Produce a strategy detailing customer contact methods and implementation plan by December 2011.

### **VALUE FOR MONEY**

The strategy details the broad principles for the ways in which we will deliver our services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the citizen in mind.

## **THE REPORT**

Since 2010 there has been a number of national reports produced encouraging Council's to address the issue of channel shift and customer contact. By 'channels' we mean the methods by which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with us, (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means). These channels are a critical part of public service provision. There is also an ongoing impetus for these channels to be managed effectively and efficiently to drive both continuous improvement and savings.

In particular the Local Government Contact Council\* produced a strategy template for use by Councils addressing channel shift. Surrey County Council acted as a pilot authority to produce the first strategy using the agreed model. The template has since been adopted as the industry model. The draft strategy attached has been developed using the Surrey model. Some areas have been streamlined to remove duplication and make it more manageable.

The concept of developing a Channel Strategy is being explored by the three authorities within the Joint ICT arrangement and by Chesterfield Borough Council. However all the authorities are at very different stages and it has been agreed that it is not appropriate at this point to have a joint strategy. Once approved the Bolsover strategy will be shared with our partners to aid learning and the sharing of knowledge.

The strategy provides clarity on the ownership of different channels across the Council and sets out improvement actions over the next two years. The strategy will need to be kept under review as technologies change and the implications of the Strategic Alliance become clearer.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the strategy. No adverse impact has been identified as the strategy is strong on accessibility and social inclusion. The views of local equality groups will continue to be sought as the strategy develops.

The draft strategy was shared with Extended Management Team on 27.10.11. It has been to ICT Strategy Group on 2.11.11 which was attended by three Cabinet members. It has been to Strategic Alliance Management Team on 3.11.11. The draft strategy was presented to Improvement Scrutiny Committee on 21.11.11 and no amendments were requested.

\* The Local Government Contact Council reports to the Local Government Delivery Council and Cabinet Office Contact Council. The Local Government Contact Council meets monthly and has senior representatives from customer service departments in local government from all UK regions as well as from key sector and central government groups. The remit of the group is to share best practice, form a link between local and central government in matters relating to customer contact and to have oversight of local government customer contact activity.

## **ISSUES/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Comments of the Director **(Delete from final version if no comments received)**.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: Any additional financial requirements which emerge as a result of this strategy will be built into an appropriate business case for consideration.

Legal: None

Human Resources: Any development implications will be built into learning and development plans.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

## **REASON FOR DECISION TO BE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION**

Decision within the function of Executive.

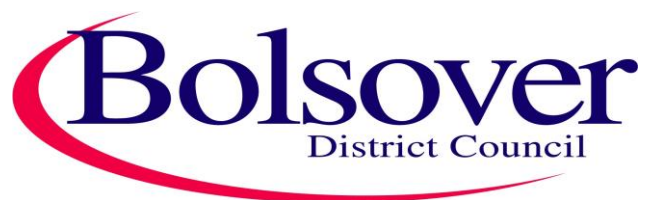
ATTACHMENTS: Yes

FILE REFERENCE: Channel Strategy 2011-13 (final)

SOURCE DOCUMENT: Channel Strategy 2011-13 (final)

# **Bolsover District Council Channel Strategy**

**2011 - 2013**





# Channel Strategy 2011- 2013

<b>Author</b>	Jane Foley
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<b>Document status</b>	Final

## Distribution

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
2.0	Customer Service Team	BDC	Review and input
2.0	Democratic Services	BDC	Review and input
2.0	Joint ICT	NEDDC	Review and input
3.0	ICT Strategy Group	BDC	Review and input
3.0	Senior Alliance Management Team	BDC	Review and input
3.0	Heads of Service	BDC	Review and input
4.0	Improvement Scrutiny Committee	BDC	Review and input
5.0	Executive	BDC	Final approval

## Revision History

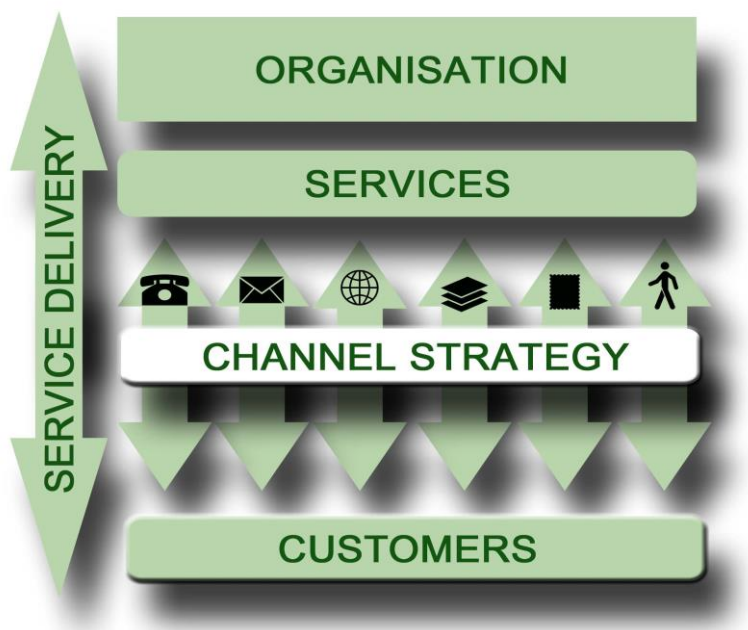
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Updated</b>	<b>Revision Author</b>	<b>Summary of Major Changes Made</b>
1.0	July 2011	Jane Foley	Initial draft for comment
2.0	August 2011	Jane Foley	Version 2 for comment
3.0	24.10.11	Jane Foley	Version 3 for consultation
4.0	7.11.11	Jane Foley	Version 4 for consultation
5.0	22.11.11	Jane Foley	Version 5 - Final

## Part 1 - Introduction

### What is a Channel Strategy?

Bolsover District Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer.

The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with us, (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means), are a critical part of public service provision. There is an ongoing impetus for these channels to be managed effectively and efficiently.



This Channel Strategy is our plan for the channels we will use to deliver services to, and interact with, our customers. The strategy explains how we will meet the contact demands of our customers using the resources we have available and bearing in mind the needs of our customers.

### Why is a Channel Strategy important now?

We have made great improvements in the way customers receive services and have improved the quality of services provided. This has been evidenced through the achievement of the national Customer Service Excellence award. We have also successfully delivered year on year improvements through the delivery of a Customer Service and Access Strategy. We now need to focus attention on identifying and developing appropriate and cost effective channels to customers.

Customers receive a high standard of customer service from many public and private sector organisations. However, citizens sometimes have low expectations of services provided by local government, and it will be necessary to exceed rather than meet these expectations to achieve channel shift to cheaper and/or more effective channels. We must continue to raise our standard of service across all the channels we use and offer.

In order to meet the needs of customers we must provide services that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use

- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Robust

It is also important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well as their skill sets when selecting channels

Rising internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for public service providers. Competent online services are easy and quick to use, available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden. Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers and taxpayers.

The public sector must however also meet the needs of people who do not (yet) have access to the internet.

We have made a commitment within our Corporate Plan 2011-15 to produce this strategy and deliver the implementation plan.

### **Key Considerations**

#### **The need for insight**

The process of developing and implementing a channel strategy needs to be guided by insight, and insight specifically relating to:

- The customer
- The services an organisation is providing and each service area in question
- The current delivery channels at the organisation's disposal as well as those that may be available to be/need to be used in future
- Other organisation-specific micro/macro factors that may have an impact on service provision and delivery.

It is also important to understand the wider online services market, as expectations of online services are driven by customer experiences of using similar services of other organisations.

#### **Organisational challenge**

In considering a channel strategy, there is often a considerable challenge and change to existing organisational structures. A channel strategy needs to become an integral part of the structure of the organisation and the way the objectives of the organisation are realised. It cannot be super-imposed or retro-fitted onto existing practices and as such is likely to require or precipitate considerable organisational change. The channel strategy will need to sit alongside any plans for accommodation change and utilisation.

We also need to recognise that people will use different channels not just for different types of interactions, but also to suit their own convenience.



Particularly at local level, an integrated channel strategy is required that takes into account the varied ways in which local people may want to interact with us.

## **Part 2 – Basic Principles and Scope**

### **Purpose of the Strategy**

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the broad principles for the ways in which we will deliver our services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the citizen in mind.

### **Scope**

This strategy document sets out the basic principles of how we will deliver our services to the public through the contact channels available.

Contact channels in scope include:

Face to face

Email

Internet

Telephone

Mobile technology (including mobile phone applications and mobile web)

Automated telephone technology

Post

This document focuses on three key types of contacts between ourselves and the citizen:

- **Transactions** (e.g. reporting a problem or paying a bill)
- **Interactions** (e.g. obtaining advice, public consultations, petitioning)
- **Information Provision** (e.g. leaflets, web pages, service booklet)

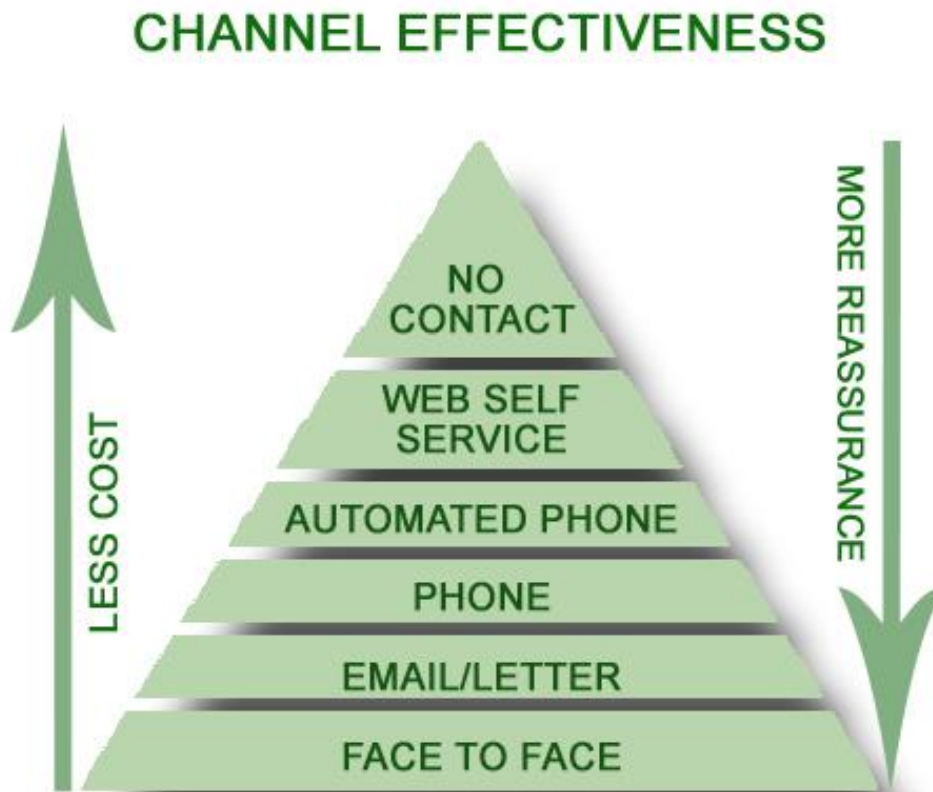
This strategy should be relevant to the nature of the services provided by us and ensure our services are provided through a range of contact channels appropriate to the citizens' individual needs and preferences in a non-discriminatory way.

### **Channel Hierarchy and Design Principles**

The choice of contact channels available to the public is growing all of the time as new technologies are developed and released. For example in the last 5 years we have seen the emergence and growth of channels such as digital social media (such as Facebook, alternate realities and Twitter), mobile internet and more recently mobile phone applications (apps).

This Channel Strategy provides us with an opportunity to evaluate our current channels and the cost of such channels. It allows us for the first time to see the relevance of each channel to our entire customer base.

There is however a generally accepted model for the effectiveness of the major channels of contact available today as shown over the page.



What this model shows is that as we move up the triangle the cost of delivery typically gets cheaper for the organisation. However for some types of contact a greater level of human contact is required, particularly for contacts that require some level of reassurance.

For example:

*Imagine you've received a letter asking you to pay a bill or the bailiffs will turn up at your house. You've just paid the bill and now want reassurance that your personal belongings are safe. You are unlikely to log on and have a look at the Council's 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQs) on the website for reassurance (even though this might be the most cost-effective solution for the organisation) but you may be more inclined to ring up the Contact Centre to request a letter confirming that matters are in hand.*

*In this example, there may be a case for having online FAQs relating to debt recovery in terms of best practice, but there is probably little chance of shifting this individual contact online.*

It is therefore vital to fully understand each type of contact and the level of reassurance that the customer is likely to require before focusing the organisation's efforts on the design of any contact channel for that service.

But of course the conundrum doesn't end there. There may be little hope of shifting the channels that a certain group uses if that group simply doesn't access that channel. For example, internet penetration is currently very low amongst the jobless, the financially excluded, older people, disabled people and people who do not read or speak English – all traditionally high users of council services. Therefore, it may not be a good use of corporate time, and taxpayer's money, to attempt to shift these contacts online. Conversely, internet usage is very high amongst teenagers, so Facebook messaging might be a good channel to communicate with young people about leisure activities. Customer insight goes a long way in the design of any channel strategy.

There are unfortunately even more factors to consider including "channel hopping", (an individual's propensity to use different channels for the same transaction depending on what is convenient to them at the time) and the public's increasing confidence in new channels that develops over years and sometimes months, creating a continually changing landscape.

The key factors to an effective channel strategy are therefore:

1. **Detail** - the deliberate design of the channel strategy for **each type of service**, bearing in mind the level of human interaction required and the needs of the targeted customer base.
2. **Fluidity** – the constant reviewing of the effectiveness of the channel strategy for each type of contact bearing in mind changing technologies, channel hopping and changing customer habits.
3. **Simplicity** – the optimum channels for the organisation should be the easiest to use for the customer to drive a shift in customer behaviour.
4. **Inclusion** – no group should be denied access to a service because of disability, language or cost of the access channel (e.g. mobile phone costs, broadband access). Options should be made available other than the organisation's preferred method of contact.
5. **Cost effectiveness** – particularly in the current economic climate, finding ways in which to deliver services effectively but at lower cost will be increasingly important.

### **Proof of Concept**

Over the last few years we have been collating data corporately to demonstrate channel usage and where appropriate channel shift. We have also collected and analysed customer segmentation and profile data to establish a better understanding of the needs of our customers.

We have established a set of customer service standards for the authority to allow us to monitor our performance against a number of channels. The 'Key

Customer Service Standards 2010/2011 Summary Report' provides an overview of our channel usage. The following is a summary:

- 91% of all incoming telephone calls were answered within 20 seconds for 2010/11 (target 90%).
- In total Contact Centres answered 81,443 (87%) calls, 2009/10 – 84,660 calls (91%). Just over 1% (1060) more calls were received in total (2010/11 93,642, 2009/10 92,581) but fewer calls were answered in total.
- 100% of enquiries acknowledged within one working day and 98% of enquiries replied to within 8 working days (targets 100% and 96% respectively).
- A reduction of 1866 or 41% in email enquiries/requests when comparing 2010/11 (2684 combined email enquiries and requests) to 2009/10 (4550 combined total).
- 96% of letters were replied to within 10 working days (target 95%). The two separate weeks of monitoring would suggest a yearly volume of around 1274 letters, which would suggest a reduction of 526 (29%) when compared to 2009/10.
- 99% of customers not kept waiting longer than 15 minutes before being served at a Contact Centre (target 99%). 94% waited less than 10 minutes to be served. (2009/10 - 98%).
- Contact Centres received 68,094 personal callers, a reduction of 2.5% when compared to 2009/10 (69,830).

In respect to payments made we have collated the following evidence to demonstrate usage and channel shift:

- Reduction of 6,981 (7%) cash transactions when comparing 2010/11 (89,953 transactions) to 2009/10 (96,934 transactions). The reason for this reduction is largely due to the shift to paying by various debit card methods of payment of their choice or direct debit.
- Reduction of 7,319 (23%) cheque transactions when comparing 2010/11 (28,089 transactions) to 2009/10 (31,751 transactions). The reason for this reduction is largely due to the shift to paying by various debit card methods of payment of their choice or direct debit.
- Reduction of 2,520 (13%) payments made to the Rent Collector when comparing 2010/11 (16,344) to 2009/10 (18,864).
- Increase of 4,457 (51%) debit card transactions in person at a cash office (Counter Card) when comparing 2010/11 (13,259 transactions) to 2009/10 (8,802 transactions).
- Increase of 788 (8.5%) debit card transactions over the telephone with a member of staff (webstaff) when comparing 2010/11 (9,912 transactions) to 2009/10 (9,124 transactions).
- Increase of 1,157 (23.5%) debit card transactions by the Automated Telephone Payment line (ATP) when comparing 2010/11 (6,066 transactions) to 2009/10 (4,909 transactions).
- Increase of 917 (17%) debit card transactions via the Internet online (Webpublic) when comparing 2010/11 (6,251 transactions) to 2009/10 (5,334 transactions).

- Increase of 11,035 (61.5%) direct debit payments when comparing 2010/11 (189,941) to 2009/10 (178,906).

In the May 2011 'Citizen's Panel' survey we asked how many of the 1,000 panel members had access to the internet and, for those who do, how they used it. We had a total of 540 replies, making the response rate to the survey 54%. This return rate is well above the national average of around 33%. The following is a summary of the responses:

- 81% had access to the internet at home, work or elsewhere.
- Of those respondents who had access to the internet, 70% had access at home, 22% had access at work and 9% had access in other locations, for instance by 'smartphone', libraries or family/ friends' houses.
- Of those who had no access to the internet (19%), 84% had no plans to, 4% planned to subscribe within the next year and 12% were thinking about subscribing but had no timescale in mind.
- 49% of respondents with access to the internet used it to access council services. Those who had used the internet had used it to view or submit planning applications (27%), report issues using the on-line forms (13%), request a service (18%), submit a compliment, comment or complaint (13%), pay rent or council tax (3%) and 'other' visits (26%) to the website were for general interest e.g. sought information about waste services, contact details and bad weather.
- Of those with access to the internet but had not accessed Council services, 49% reported that this is because they had no need to.

Socitm have recently produced a briefing 'Digital by default – why and how: a guide for local public service management teams'. The briefing brings together two reports that discuss customer management in local authorities and the opportunity to make significant efficiencies by making services digital. Socitm's channel value benchmarking service shows enquiry handling through the web costs about £0.32 per enquiry, as opposed to £2.90 for telephone enquiries and £7.40 for face to face (front office costs only). The most important conclusion from the report is the need for 'an excellent website integrated with all other customer channels'. The Socitm 'Better Connected 2011' survey of all council websites suggests that only a third are properly orientated to the needs of the customer. Despite our increased efforts over the last two years disappointingly our website did not score highly on content or usability in the survey. Socitm have also identified that 21% of visits to council websites during 2010 ended in complete failure. The survey indicates that websites are improving but the pace is modest and not sufficient in an ever developing digital world. Socitm believe that the web team should be run and located within the customer service function. This strategy will start to address issues identified in the survey, however large scale channel migration will require dedicated resources over and above that identified in this initial strategy.

### **Part 3 – Bolsover District Council's Channel Strategies**

## **Local Context**

We are a relatively rural area in the county of Derbyshire with four main towns and a number of smaller villages and hamlets. We have a population of approximately 75,600 living in approximately 34,000 households. We are currently ranked 43 out of 327 in the Index of Deprivation.

Certain areas within the District have poor broadband facilities and network coverage for mobile phones can be very sporadic, resulting in a lack of understanding and development in terms of the technology available to citizens. The government has made a commitment to invest in the broadband network and has identified funding in the region of £7 million for Derbyshire. The government's aim is to ensure that the UK has the best superfast broadband network by 2015 to enable 90% of homes and businesses nationally to access.

Our population is made up of individuals who all have specific needs and preferences as to how they would like to contact us. So we therefore have to be more creative and imaginative in terms of how we provide access to our services.

This integrated Channel Strategy seeks to provide a full range of choices of access designed to ensure that no individual, group or community is disadvantaged through lack of access to the services the authority offers.

## **Overarching Channel Strategy**

In line with the purpose of this strategy we will:

1. Make access to our services available through appropriate and cost effective contact channels designed with the needs and preferences of our customers and council taxpayers in mind.
2. Seek to encourage greater usage of the most effective contact methods, by creating a series of deliberate and targeted channel shifts.
3. Not discriminate against any individual by limiting the choice of contact methods available.

## **Ownership of the Channel Strategy**

The implementation of this strategy will be the responsibility of the Head of Customer Service and Performance.

## **Review Period**

Due to the changing nature of technological advances and changes in customer preferences this strategy will by its nature be constantly evolving.

The implementation plan associated with this strategy will be reviewed through our performance management framework.

A formal review and if required re-publishing of this document will be made by 2013 when initial preparatory work identified within the implementation plan has been completed.

## **Contact Channel Governance**

The production of this strategy has provided an opportunity for us to formally assign ownership to different channels as follows:

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Contact Centre	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Contact Centre Telephony	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Telephone – generic	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Telephone – specific	Heads of Service
Mobile Telephony	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Face to Face – specific	Heads of Service
Website	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Email – specific	Heads of Service
Email – generic (enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk )	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Letters	Heads of Service
Post	Head of Democratic Services
New Media / Social Networking Sites (co-ordination and development)	Head of Customer Service and Performance

Specific issues regarding contact are allocated as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Accessibility	Head of Customer Service and Performance/ Equality Improvement Officer
Avoidable Contact	Head of Customer Service and Performance/ Customer Contact Manager
Channel Shift	Head of Customer Service and Performance
Digital Inclusion	Head of Customer Service and



	Performance
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## Accessibility of Contact Strategy

**“We will aim to provide a full range of contact channels for each of our services, with some channels providing enhanced access for customers with special requirements”**

### **What is an “Accessibility of Contact” Strategy?**

In the context of this document, accessibility of contact refers to the ease or difficulty that a citizen may experience whilst using different electronic access channels to obtain services from us. For example, someone with hearing difficulties may find the telephone unusable and may prefer to communicate through email. Equally a customer who does not have English as their first language may not be able to access any contact channel without appropriate translation services. It is important that we enable vulnerable people to become less isolated and better connected to the help they need.

### **The key actions that we will take to provide access for all**

1. Continually engage with groups representing those with specific requirements for the way they contact us and ensure that an appropriate choice of channel is available to those individuals.
2. Ensure that we widely advertise our choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach groups.
3. Provide a translation service to allow easy access to the authority for all through face to face, website and telephone channels.
4. Make reasonable adjustments to channels as needed.

### **Accessibility of Contact Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
A1	Ensure the website is fully compliant with government and national accessibility standards.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013
A2	Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on the channel mix and proposed changes detailed within this strategy.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	December 2011
A3	Consult with the Equality Panel and/or other known representative groups on proposed changes detailed within this strategy.	Equality Improvement Officer	March 2013

## Avoidable Contact Strategy

**“We will aim to reduce the need for customers to contact us by reducing red tape, automating processes and working with partners to provide seamless services”**

### **Why should we minimise avoidable contact?**

Local authorities are fundamental points of contact for the citizen when seeking access to public services. They provide key services for their local communities that greatly affect the quality of life for individual citizens and the overall community. The customer experience when contacting authorities should be one which is responsive, timely and efficient.

However, both local authorities and their customers also have limited resources and want to interact as efficiently as possible. By identifying customer contact that is ‘avoidable’, the local authority and its partners are better placed to redesign the way services and information are made more accessible for their customers, so they do not have to make unnecessary, valueless contacts which are both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider.

We will work with internal departments and partners to design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact with the public sector multiple times to complete one transaction. For example notifying a change of address once rather than contacting multiple departments or reporting ‘street’ incidents or faults.

### **The key actions that we will take to reduce unnecessary contact**

1. Continue to analyse ‘avoidable contact’ data from our main customer access channels to look at opportunities to reduce the need for customers to make unnecessary or multiple contacts with us.
2. Increase the number of customer queries that we are able to resolve first time on the telephone to prevent the need for a repeat call.
3. Participate in national efficiency projects that aim to reduce the need for unnecessary contact with public sector organisations.

### **Avoidable Contact Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
AC1	Work with partners through the national ‘Tell Us Once’ project to	Head of Customer Service and	December 2011

	eliminate multiple customer contacts when registering a death.	Performance	
AC2	Work with partners through the national 'Tell Us Once' project to improve the process for notification of 'change of circumstances'.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	Target date to be set by government. Provisional - December 2012
AC3	Eliminate unnecessary contact through identifying top ten business processes to be challenged and feed into service review process.	Head of Customer Service and Performance/ SAMT	February 2012

### **Channel Shift Strategy**

**“We will design cost effective, efficient and user friendly means of contacting us and publicise the benefits of these channels”**

### **What is Channel Shift?**

Channel shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to access, or interact with, services via channels other than those to which they normally choose.

Deliberate channel shift is the design and marketing of effective and efficient channels because they are the most appropriate channels for the type of contact, customer and organisation in question. Channel shift forms one part of an overall channel strategy, and implemented well it can lower costs, build reputation, empower the citizen and improve the overall service proposition. Shifting customers to particular channels involves behaviour change on the citizen's part, but once they are aware of the channels available, they will use the one that works best for them

We will actively encourage residents to shift to new and more effective channels.

### **The key actions that we will take to create channel shift**

1. Ensure service reviews consider the issue of channel shift and compare the effectiveness/ usage of different channels for each service and seek to shift contacts to the most appropriate channels.
2. Continue to develop and promote the website as our main communication channel and develop transactional services further.
3. Encourage employees to use the public website to transact in their day to day work to ensure that the site is fit for purpose for our residents and make improvements as required.
4. Use our marketing and communication expertise to direct customers to the most appropriate channels.

### **Channel Shift Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
CS1	Through service reviews identify a series of business cases to move more transactions online (including information transactions), that take into account the dual benefits to the public, and ease of use in the Contact Centre.	Head of Customer Service and Performance/ Heads of Service	March 2013
CS2	Departments to place more engaging content on the website to increase both staff and public confidence, usage and interaction with the site.	Heads of Service / Communications Officer	March 2012

## Digital Inclusion Strategy

**“We will ensure that citizens who do not have access to digital channels at home or work are not disadvantaged when communicating with us”**

### **What is a Digital Inclusion?**

Over 40% of the UK populations do not use online channels, including websites such as NHS Choices, bolsover.gov.uk and Directgov. This means that 8.7 million people in the UK are non internet users. The Government is driving a programme of digital participation.

Exclusion from access to digital channels matters to users, especially as the digitally excluded group includes socially excluded and hard to reach groups who are likely to have the greatest needs from public services. It also matters for the delivery of efficient public services, because when people cannot access services online they invariably access them via alternative means which are generally more expensive. It is therefore important that any channel strategy includes plans for communicating with these hard to reach groups and to ensure that public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens.

### **The key actions that we will take to help reduce digital exclusion**

1. Widely advertise our full choice of contact channels, particularly to hard to reach/ socially excluded groups.
2. Promote wherever possible throughout the Council partner public internet access at key locations in the district e.g. libraries.
3. Never design or deliver a service that is available only through digital channels.
4. Consider the impact of digital exclusion when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on services.
5. Support national campaigns to increase the number of people online and therefore able to access our services.

### **Digital Inclusion Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
D1	Promote partner public internet access and free/low cost citizen ICT training through our publications, public notice boards and the website.	Communications Officer	March 2013
D2	Work towards meeting British Standard (BS 8878) to address the need for digital inclusion.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013
D3	Support the ‘Race Online 2012’ national campaign.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	December 2012

D4	Run a specific campaign highlighting what digital access channels we have.	Communications Officer	December 2012
D5	Keep under review opportunities for supporting access to internet and ICT skills i.e. Youth Councillors sharing their internet/ICT skills with the Older Peoples Forum in December 2011.	Heads of Service	March 2013

## Part 4 – Strategies for Specific Channels

### Telephone Strategy

**“We will minimise the number of contact numbers published to provide fast access to experienced staff and reduce the amount of non urgent calls that our residents have to make to us”**

#### **Our key actions to provide easy telephone access**

1. Provide one main telephone number- 242424 - for the organisation which can be easily found and remembered.
2. Keep the telephone abandonment rate below 10%.
3. Continually seek to resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact.
4. Provide access to translation services to allow easy access for all.

#### **Telephone Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
T1	Review the published A-Z of 'back office' telephone numbers and establish if any of the services are suitable for migrating into the Contact Centre.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013
T2	Continue to explore the use of automated agents for high volume calls.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2012
T3	Produce a business case as part of Project Horizon for replacing the main telephony system.	Head of Joint ICT	March 2012
T4	Promote the use of the automated telephone payment system through a publicity campaign.	Communications Officer	December 2012
T5	Strengthen informal complaints procedure so that repeat complaints are assigned to an individual officer for point of contact resolution.	Customer Service and Access Officer	March 2012
T6	Consider introducing a separate Call Centre target for 80 % (Call Centre Industry Standard) of calls answered within the Customer Service Standard of 20 seconds.	Customer Contact Manager	March 2012

#### **Performance Management and Governance**



- In 2011/12 our target is to answer 91% of incoming calls within 20 seconds.
- Customer Service Index (CSI) Satisfaction Level with telephone contact to the Call Centre (242424) 2007 – 70%, 2009 – 80.2%.

## Mobile Phone Strategy

**“We will use the emerging mobile phone technology to provide better access to information for targeted user groups to increase the speed of communication, lower costs and reduce direct contact”**

Nationally Ofcom latest Communications Market Report (2011) research has identified that 27% of adults and 47% of teenagers now own a smartphone, with 59% being acquired in the last year. The emerging mobile phone technology has the ability if harnessed to increase the speed of communication, whilst lowering costs.

### **Our key actions to develop mobile telephone access**

1. Explore and utilise emerging technology to improve services to customers.
2. Explore the possibility of using mobile phone applications for citizens to access our services at a time to suit them.
3. Utilise ‘Quick Response’ codes on all publicity to promote the use of our website for citizens with smart phones.

### **Mobile Phone Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
M1	Introduce text messaging system to inform tenants of repairs appointments.	Head of Housing	December 2011
M2	Explore appropriate developing applications (apps) for mobile phones including fault reporting and simple information provision.	Communications Officer	March 2013
M3	Introduce Quick Response (QR) codes on all council publicity for those with smart phones to access our website more easily.	Communications Officer	March 2012

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- Performance and usage of this channel will be monitored as services are developed.

## Web Strategy

**“We will provide a single, comprehensive, up-to-date, easy to access and use website that allows anyone to transact and interact with us”**

### **Our key actions to develop web access**

1. Promote the website as the main access point for our services for simple information and transactional services.
2. Provide a single website for the organisation to make contacting us straightforward for everyone.
3. Increase the usability of our online systems to make them the channel of choice for simple transaction to promote channel shift.
4. Ensure that all web content is written in Plain English and is easy to understand.
5. Ensure the website meets with government and national accessibility standards and is available in a wide range of language options through free translation tools.

### **Web Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
W1	Raise employee awareness of Channel Strategy and use of website within their daily tasks.	Communications Officer	December 2012
W2	Work with ICT to integrate online transactions directly into back office systems to prevent double entering of information.	Communications Officer	March 2013
W3	Ensure that all Council leaflets and literature is made available via the website in order to reduce printing costs and environmental impact.	Communications Officer	March 2013
W4	Ensure that all communication activity as identified in the Communication Plan is replicated on the Council’s website.	Communications Officer	December 2012
W5	Maintain the existing community organisation websites.	Communications Officer	March 2013
W6	Develop on-line facilities to make requesting a service easier e.g. searchable database for bin collections, which ward do I live in, etc.	Communications Officer	March 2013
W7 (also A1)	Ensure the website is fully compliant with government and national accessibility standards.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- Ensure that the website is available and operational 24/7.

- Maintain overall service excellence as evidenced by customer feedback, industry awards and SOCITM usability ratings.
- Obtain and maintain the “WCAG 2.0 level AA” rating for accessibility by all.

## Face to Face Strategy

**“We will maintain face to face services through our four Contact Centres with fully trained customer advisors providing a cost effective service”**

### **Our key actions to develop our face to face provisions**

1. Make the Contact Centre service more cost effective.
2. Actively seek opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations and fully utilise people and building assets.
3. Make better use of our publicity in our public buildings to encourage people to use different access channels.

### **Face to Face Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
F1	Implement the approved recommendations in the Contact Centre Review 2011.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2012
F2	Undertake process reviews to identify potential channel shift and quality improvements to our face to face service.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013
F3	Publicise the different access channels available to those who use face to face as their main contact method.	Communications Officer	March 2013
F4	Explore opportunities to share face to face provision with other organisations as appropriate.	Head of Customer Service and Performance	March 2013

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- We will aim to greet customers as they enter our building or when they approach an enquiry desk.
- We will aim not to keep customers waiting more than fifteen minutes to be served at a Contact Centre.

## Post/Paper Strategy

**“We will reduce the amount and costs of post and paper communication by better use of electronic channels”**

### **Our key actions to deliver a reduction in our post/paper communication**

1. Provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled.
2. Place more of our leaflets and information online in order to minimise printing and reduce our environmental impact.
3. Use email wherever possible to communicate with customers.
4. Use second class post as our main postal tariff to minimise cost to the tax payer.
5. Where we require a written response e.g. electoral registration, customer satisfaction we will provide prepaid postage.
6. Where we have a statutory duty to provide written information to customer’s e.g. Council tax bills, polling cards etc. we will minimise costs by using bulk mailing.
7. We will utilise and use where appropriate web channels and social media to promote our services, activities and functions.
8. Encourage citizens to register for email alerts, e-marketing, e-newsletters, etc for updates on our services and activities to help reduce printing and postage costs.

### **Post/Paper Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
P1	Analyse postal distribution/ mailing lists within departments and introduce email service as appropriate.	Heads of Service	December 2012
P2	Provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled.	Heads of Service/ Communications Officer	March 2013
P3	Review and evaluate alternative postal providers to ensure the best value for money is obtained.	Head of Democratic Services	March 2012
P4	Use web channels and social media to promote our services.	Communications Officer	March 2012
P5	Provide the opportunity for citizens to register for e-marketing material.	Communications Officer	December 2012

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- Reply to letters and faxes within ten working days.

- By March 2012 reduce external postal costs by 5% and paper costs by 10% (from 2010/11 costs) and review thereafter.

## Email Strategy

**“We will aim to reduce the amount of generic email communication by better use of electronic forms and other electronic channels”**

### **Our key actions to develop our email provision**

1. Continue to provide a generic email service through enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk
2. Develop other channels in the ways detailed in this document to provide more attractive options to the email channel.
3. Provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of emails handled.
4. Improve the emails we send by including more information and links to our website and other digital channels.

### **Email Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
E1	Include more information in emails that link directly to our website on the specific email subject matter.	Heads of Service	March 2013
E2 (Also P2)	Provide a complete range of online forms to minimise the amount of post handled.	Heads of Service/ Communications Officer	March 2013

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- Acknowledge all enquiries within one working day
- Respond to enquiries in full within eight working days.



## New Media Strategy

**“We will learn from the early adopters of new and emerging media and implement only tested channels which are beneficial to our customers”**

### **Our key actions to develop our new media provisions**

1. Review emerging and maturing media channels.
2. Ensure protocols are in place for the use of new media.
3. Develop other channels/media alternatives so access to services is available to our citizens at all times.

### **New Media Strategy Actions in Detail**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Delivery Date</b>
NM1	Review the use of social networking sites e.g. Twitter, Facebook as a media channel across the Council and identify protocols for use.	Communications Officer	December 2012
NM2	Review the use of social media sites e.g. Youtube as a media channel across the Council and identify protocols for use.	Communications Officer	December 2012
NM3	Explore the feasibility of providing live broadcasts and/or podcasts of committee meetings.	Communications Officer	December 2012

### **Performance Management and Governance**

- All new product launches should be subject to a full business case.
- Overall governance of new media should be the responsibility of the ICT Strategy Group.

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### Acknowledgement

The Local Government Contact Council produced a strategy template for use by Councils addressing channel shift. Surrey County Council acted as a pilot authority to produce the first strategy using the agreed model. The template has since been adopted as the industry model. This strategy has been developed using the Surrey County Council model who have kindly given their

permission for the re-use of text and pictures in part 1 and 2 of this strategy document.