

# Wirral Council - Customer Access Strategy

## 1 Introduction

The aim of Wirral Council is to improve the quality of life for Wirral people and to work with our partners to deliver the best services we can, in the most efficient and effective way. This document is intended to be used as a framework for the development of all Wirral's access channels, making information and services more accessible to our customers.

In order to be an effective tool in the development of improved customer services, the customer access strategy is a living document, which is continually reviewed and modified. All staff must be aware of the Council's vision for the future through team briefings, key issues and staff meetings, and managers must continue to take time to explain its content, the importance attached to it, and its relevance to each service and individual staff. This will preclude costly developments, which do not fit with this view, and serve to support the development of front-line services.

The importance of the Customer Access Strategy has increased further with it being one of the three cornerstone projects of Wirral's Efficiency Plan recognising the key role Customer Services plays in bringing ongoing efficiencies along with improved co-ordinated customer access.

### 1.1 Customer Pledge

Wirral Council is committed to ensuring that all of its customers can access its services with ease, and has published a customer pledge, which underlines this commitment. The pledge states:

We want to:

- Make it as easy as possible for customers to contact us
- Deal with customer enquiries as quickly as possible

Wherever and however customers get in touch with us we aim to:

- Resolve enquiries first time – although some issues need to be referred to specialist staff
- Provide a consistent and high quality service

We shall make our services available at times and places and in ways which are convenient to the customer:

- We expect that customers may want to contact us by a variety of means
- We will make it easy for customers to talk to us directly by providing One Stop Shops and Information Points in places people can easily travel to
- We will make it easy for customers to telephone us
- We will make it easy for customers to deal with us electronically by providing our services via the internet with self access maximised.
- Encourage customers to use the cheapest most efficient access channel appropriate to their query

Our Customer Care Guidelines identify the specific standards to which services will be delivered.

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## 1.2 Context

The demographic make-up of the Wirral is diverse. It has areas of high deprivation and wards that are considered wealthy. It has an ageing population, and a relatively small percentage of its residents do not speak English as their first language. There are areas where the population has poor literacy skills, although the population's access and use of the Internet continues to grow.

## 1.3 Background

Wirral Council is committed to making the Council's services more accessible to its customers through all available access channels. One stop shops were established in 1997, and continue to be very popular with customers. There are 13 located throughout the Borough, in areas with good public transport links. Four of these one stop shops are located in Jobcentre Plus premises alongside six Information Points based in Libraries with Video Links to our Call Centre in seven others. This development helped us achieve our Local Public Service Agreement of '95% of residential properties in the current area being within one mile of either a One Stop Shop or an Information Point'

The Council is also committed to the ongoing development of the call centre, which makes it easier for customers to contact the Council, by creating a small range of consecutive telephone numbers by which all services can be accessed.

Recent Best Value Reviews and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment continue to identify that many of the services the Council provides are of a high standard. This strategy continues to build on our customer service standard.

The new website is live in April 2007 and will be the focus of much work responding to the increasing demand of access to service via the Internet. This will require provision of both good clear quality information and being able to apply for services on line as well as see the position. The same information we use should also support our front line staff in providing both guidance and service resolution. Our plans for improvement intend to achieve this.

## 2 Drivers

### 2.1 The T-government agenda

Wirral successfully met its e-Government targets and now looks forward to achieving success at the T-Government agenda. Transformational Government is about ensuring the authority's business can be conducted via such routes as the web that promotes self service wherever practical. It also encourages use of these channels to support ongoing work via other access routes. Thus Wirral is promoting various methods of teleworking and utilising the latest technology to support staff in undertaking their work.

### 2.2 Gershon & Varney Reviews

Both of these reviews focus attention on reducing cost and increasing efficiencies. Driving down the cost of service provision is fundamental to the development of a sustainable customer access strategy. Economies of scale, more joined up service provision, the reduction of unnecessary repeat contacts, re-design of how contacts are handled; appropriate access points and web advancements will lead to cost savings.

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It is still relevant to show The Cabinet Office assessed the cost of accessing services from 2004:

Self service via the Internet	12p
Video conferencing via kiosk	£1.50
Telephone call	£2.00
Face to face visit	£9.00 (Wirral's 2006 figure is £8.11)

Hence the more information available via the Internet and able to be concluded without intervention, the lower the cost of providing the service. Additionally, encouraging customers able to access the web-site to do so, releases resources within customer facing services for those who are not able to self-serve, thereby improving the levels of service via all channels, including to those with most need and most limited access.

Increased value is more likely to be achieved by transactional online services than by passive information provision. For this change to be successful we need to help customers to gain confidence and trust in using our electronic self-serve, which will require proactive promotion and marketing of the benefits and reassurance of its security and privacy.

To do this we will actively promote the web-site's availability and ease of use, and ensure that the customer's expectation of a swift response is met. Additionally we must look at when customers need to access human assistance when carrying out on-line transactions especially out of normal office hours; if this is not established take-up of self-service channels may be limited.

Efficiencies are also achieved by separating customer facing duties from skilled back office functions, allowing experts to concentrate on specialised work, and trained customer care operatives to deal with the public. This will facilitate enhanced performance management, as well as an improved customer experience. The customer services development team remit is to work along side departments to improve their processes, utilise technology and ensure that their services are available through the primary access channels.

Unnecessary repeat callers are an avoidable cost to the authority and the Citizens Panel shows an ongoing high level of respondents have to make contact with the Council again about their most recent enquiry. Nearly all repeat contacts can be avoided by effective resolution at the first point of call, and effective communication about the progress of the enquiry. A customer will escalate an unsuccessful contact to a more expensive access channel, for example an unanswered e-mail to a telephone call, or an unsatisfactory phone call to a visit to the Council and this theory is borne out by the respondents to the Citizens' Panel who indicated that if they had to contact the Council about the same issue their choice of access channel would move away from telephone contact and towards face to face contacts.

Encouraging customers to access the Council's services by the more preferred contact method, the telephone, rather than face to face, will further reduce costs as will an ongoing shift towards self access. To do this we must ensure that the telephone service is easily accessed and responsive and our website able to respond to need. We will continue to review each service to ensure where possible that

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transactions can be carried out over the phone and on the Internet. We will use the appropriate systems to share information and evidence between departments, thus reducing the need for unnecessary paperwork.

National standards for authentication (that is confirming the identity of the service user) are available via Government Connect. Wirral will comply with the national standard set by the Government Connect project.

### **2.3 Customer expectations**

Whilst the results of independent inspections such as the CPA indicate that local authorities are improving but overall satisfaction with local authorities has declined. Whilst these results appear to be contradictory, they can be explained by the fact that customer expectations rise as service provision continues to improve in many other aspects of people's everyday lives. Our Customer Access Strategy is our way of ensuring we continue to meet those rising expectations.

### **2.4 Local Public Service Agreement**

The Council met its Customer Services target under the Local Public Service Agenda (LPSA) guaranteeing that 95% of all Wirral residents will be within 1 mile of a one stop shop or information point. As face to face customer service is expensive it is essential that we make full use of existing customer access points by all services as well as extending our work with partners. Aligned to this important target will be the extension of access through electronic means.

## **3 What do our customers want?**

Significant work has been carried out to identify our customers' priorities so that we can plan our customer access channels around these needs. Findings compare the responses from July 2004 to July 2006.

This research revealed that only 68% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the information / advice they were given in relation to their query when they last contacted the council, an increase of 3%. Of the 32% who were not satisfied, most still quoted unhelpful or unobtainable staff as the reason for their dissatisfaction. This information clearly indicates that, whilst customers did not generally find it difficult to contact the council, they found it difficult to speak to a person who was able to assist them fully with their enquiry. The services dealt with by the Call Centre already were found to be easy to contact and were felt to deliver a better service. This supports the view that fully trained and skilled staff available to deal with the majority of enquiries, and able to sign-post customers to other sources of information where appropriate is well received. The information available to front-line staff will be made available by the service providers, who will remain responsible for the quality of this information.

The research also indicates that most people want to contact the Council by phone. The contact with the Call Centre being well received. However answer phones were also given as the reason for a customer's dissatisfaction with a service and these should no longer be used in public facing services.

Best Value Performance Indicators as our Customer Care Guarantees identify customer access trends and we respond to these on an ongoing basis. We continue to find out customer expectations, needs and demands through a variety of ways. We

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consult with our key stakeholders / partners through groups such as the Voluntary and Community Advice Network and relevant Social Inclusion groups. The continued use of the Citizens Panel and other Council customer surveys seeks the views of the voluntary and community sector organisations for a fair and equal cross representation of opinions.

### 4. Staff Involvement

All staff should know, understand and implement this strategy. This will be achieved initially through communication via corporate channels such as the team briefing process as well as direct work in services as they engage with Customer Services. Staff and stakeholder involvement will contribute to the strategy evolving, developing and ensuring its responsiveness to customer need.

### 5. 1 Business

The 1 Business programme to helping improve delivery of services with modern integrated core IT systems across the Council. This should enable the authority's services and the way they are offered to be streamlined and improved as a minimum in the following areas:

- ← The development and implementation of the Council's Customer Services commitment which is aimed at improving the access to Council services, via mediated, assisted or self-service access channels.
- ← The implementation of the Council's T-government commitments including core applications.
- ← Project management and process re-engineering services to support the implementation of the new ICT applications and the wider improvement of services.
- ← Training of end-users to derive the full benefits of the new systems.

The Council's new ICT applications are in the areas of financial management, customer relationship management (CRM), workflow, electronic procurement and internet and intranet content management, land gazetteer and document management.

### 6. Our Vision

Wirral Council's customer services offer a choice of access channels, all of which will provide the customer with the same high quality service. We will encourage access by the most efficient and least expensive channel that is appropriate to the service area, always recognising our responsibility to ensure our need to encourage access to those less able to use technology driven access channels.

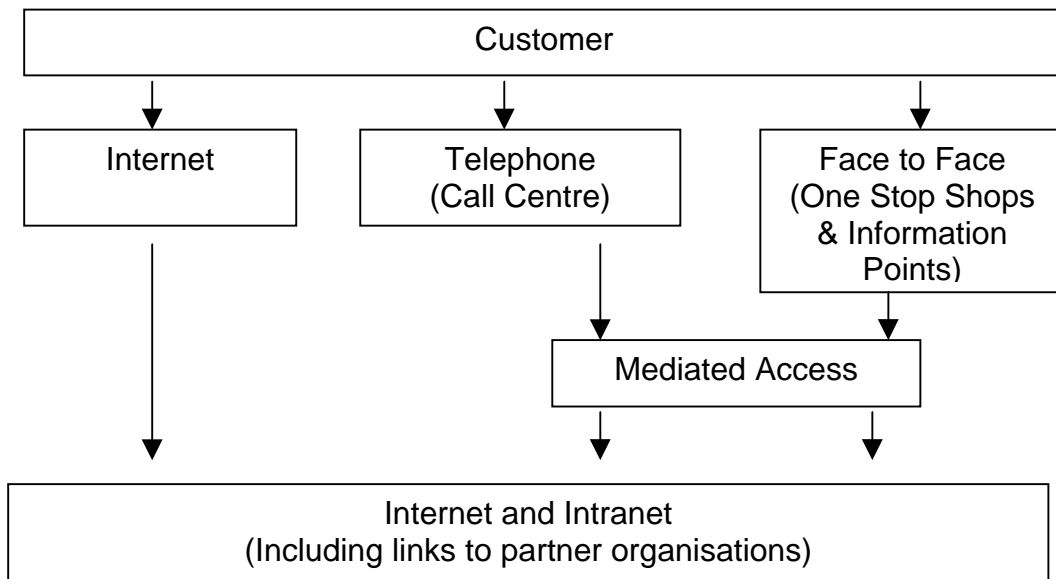
Our services will be responsive and listen and react to the views of customers. We will make it easy for our customers to comment on the services we provide so that we can review and improve these services in line with customer expectations.

Our services will be effective and efficient and offer value for money. Customer service staff will provide a high quality holistic service, and resolve as many queries as possible at the first point of contact and this aim will extend to self service channels. With generic staff we are able to respond to a range of queries as well as

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promote related services. For example a customer making a housing benefit claim will also be advised that they can qualify for a leisure pass and free school meals, while offered appointments with partner organisations such as the Jobcentre Plus. We will exploit the use of a customer relationship management (CRM) system to facilitate this enhanced level of service.

The Internet and Intranet development is fundamental to the success of customer services. As a general principle all information and advice, as well as requests and payments for services will be accessible via the Internet; additional information will only be withheld if there are legislative reasons for doing so. This will mean that a customer accessing a service on-line will receive the same information, guidance and level of service as someone phoning the council or calling into a one stop shop as shown below:



It is likely that those customers accessing services on-line will continue to grow, but for a long time the most popular access channels will continue to be the mediated access channels of phone and face to face.

We will continue to develop customer access channels in a joined-up and co-ordinated approach that makes sense to our customers and fully exploits existing resources and maximises use of the cheapest appropriate access channel.

Some customers find it more difficult to access our services than others. Our joined-up approach means that all front-line staff are immediately able to access any necessary additional support such as Language Line or the Mincom service.

Advances in information technology and partnership arrangements will continue to be used to create a service which provides a focal point for the whole community, and can support and encourage business development in the area, as well as addressing other high priorities for our customers such as health and crime reduction.

### 7. Equality and Inclusion

We recognise and celebrate the diversity of Wirral's population, and strive to ensure that our services are equally accessible to all residents, guided by the principles in

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the Council's Social Inclusion Strategy. We will continue to work with our partners in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in order to ensure that our plans for service development reflect the needs of the whole community.

We engage productively with our colleagues in the Voluntary and Community Sector Network to ensure this strategy remains relevant and responsive to the needs of all customers and representative organisations.

All of our front-line staff receive diversity and equality training, so that they can recognise and respond to the specific needs of every customer. Our One Stop Shops cater for wheelchair users, as well as for those who are hard of hearing or visually impaired, and provide private interview rooms for those who wish to make use of them. All front-line staff are able to access interpreters, and our literature is available in alternative languages, large print, audio and Braille versions on request.

We will make use of the functionality of new IT systems such as the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, to monitor take-up of our services and to promote services to specific groups where we determine that take-up is low.

### **8 Face to Face and Telephone Services**

Wirral Council is radically changing the way its services are accessed, and will no longer provide them just within the existing departmental structure. Instead all services will be brought into the call centre and one stop shops up to an agreed cut-off point, after which the enquiry will be referred to expert staff in the "back office". Customers will therefore be able to resolve a range of queries around the council's services at the same contact point for example bereavement and change in circumstances

We will no longer offer services at existing reception points staffed by existing teams, as this is not cost-effective. The cost of service provision is driven up where resources are duplicated and expert staff are not released from dealing with routine enquiries to concentrate on specialist tasks. Existing departmental receptions will only be used in cases where a pre-arranged business appointment has been made. This will mean that customers or partners with specific needs (e.g. wheelchair users) can be offered appointments at alternative venues, which are convenient and accessible to them, such as at any of the one stop shops. This reduces the number of publicly accessed receptions that have to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and expenditure can be focused on the remaining publicly accessible sites.

This generic service provision will not mean that call centre and one stop shop staff will simply be "message takers". We will use available ICT to provide as in depth service as possible, and where we identify that a complete end to end service is required by specialist officers this will be maintained. Our ongoing development plans are shown in Appendices 6, 7 and 8.

### **9 Kiosks**

Although we have a network of One Stop Shop and Information Points we will continue to review the development of kiosks located in convenient and accessible sites across the Borough. Kiosks will need to be easy to use so that our customers

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are not discouraged from using them. This may be relevant by working with partners to offer a broad range of services through these kiosks, and any Council's kiosks will be developed corporately so customers can easily recognise them.

### **10 Internet development**

We will continue to encourage our customers to access information and services via the web as a self service option, and we will therefore exploit available IT systems to ensure that the information held is accurate and complete. The web-site will be developed in line with national accessibility standards. Our Internet development plan is shown in Appendix 3. Given the growth and the potential of this access channel this will form an increasingly large part of our drive for modernising services.

Moving service users who can and want to use this access channel will allow easier access to other customer access channels for those not able to use the Internet, thus confirming choice, availability and focus whilst encouraging use of the cheapest appropriate channel. To do this successfully will require our self-service access to allow interactions to be completed, progress to be self-monitored and authorised, identified access to be seen as thoroughly secure.

The self service channels will be attractive to potential users to ensure they choose this leaving other channels able to focus on users who need to access services through mediated access points.

### **11 E-mail and SMS Text Messaging**

As part of our development e-mails are beginning to be handled corporately via customer service access points and this will continue to ensure the co-ordinated and controlled use of this channel. We will continue to explore the potential of the introduction of SMS (text messaging), in order to reduce costs and to address issues of social inclusion. There are clear advantages of using this developing medium particularly to get our messages out quickly as well as receive them. These access channels are expected to grow and we will be ready to fully exploit and respond to them. The Call Centre will play a central part in handling contacts via these channels and their development will be achieved alongside colleagues from the service, the central change team and ICT.

### **12 White mail**

We recognise that some customers will still contact us by letter, and we have effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and a local performance indicator, to ensure that letters are responded to within agreed timescales and to agreed standards. Wherever possible we will make use of effective electronic document handling systems to make this monitoring less onerous.

### **13 Working with Business**

One of Wirral's corporate objectives is "promoting and supporting the economic regeneration of Wirral", and it is therefore vital that our services for businesses are as equally accessible and effective. We will therefore work closely with commercial



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businesses, community groups and social enterprises to identify what is important to them, and improve our accessibility for businesses.

### **14 Measuring the success of the strategy**

In order to assess the effectiveness of this strategy we will measure our progress against a set of metrics, these being

- The cost of providing each service
- Levels of customer satisfaction with each service
- Volumes per access channel
- Numbers of repeat contacts
- Numbers of fully resolved queries at first point of contact

We are developing a consistent set of measurements to help accurately measure progress. We will have local performance indicators in every service for each of these measures, and these will be regularly monitored by the Customer Services Group and reported to Chief Officers and Members.

### **15 Human Resources Strategy**

#### **15.1 Recruitment and Selection**

Customer services staff provide a high quality holistic service, and look to resolve as many queries as possible at the first point of contact. The service via its staff must also continue to represent value for money. Customer facing staff are selected for their customer service skills, and are provided with the tools and training to carry out their role effectively. We recognise that effective staff selection leads to increased customer satisfaction, increased job satisfaction and improved staff retention. The Council has flexible working patterns to suit the needs of our customers and staff.

#### **15.2 Career Progression**

We recognise that staff may perceive front-line service provision as an unsound career move due to the limited prospects for advancement within that area. We have a progression programme recognising the skills and potential of staff employed within customer facing services. We also have a formal training programme that recognises Customer Services as a subject that staff can study and use the knowledge to develop their careers and improve the service.

### **16 Publicity**

We work with Corporate Services' Publicity to ensure we publicise new services as they are developed and that customers are encouraged to use the full range of access channels including being encouraged to access the cheapest appropriate access channel for their needs.

### **17 Governance**

The Customer Services Group (CSG) will manage and review the implementation of this strategy. Decisions and recommendations made by the this group will be ratified by the Corporate Improvement Group, which will be responsible for ensuring that the strategy is adopted and implemented corporately. Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be updated on the strategy and its effectiveness as well as being asked to contribute to its evolving content.

### 18. How the Council is changing to deliver the Customer Access Strategy

Whilst the services being reviewed gives the authority the initial push to begin the drive forward, the longer term planning once laid out will help achieve ongoing success and we have a number of options as the way forward in the process by which we reasonably select services and which are selected. All departments must lead their own service Business Process Re-Engineering to ensure success and service involvement. This will though be alongside help from both the central and customer service that will provide appropriate guidance. The amounts of resource that can be applied to this change task are finite and must be balanced with other developments and ongoing service delivery issues. The options in selecting the order of services and then co-ordinating our change resources are:

- Identify where biggest savings / efficiencies will occur, options to identify such services could include VFM criteria as used by the Audit Commission or other measurable factors.
- Identify where service standard can be improved either quickly or substantially.
- By volume of public contacts addressing the big numbers first to have clear impact on service contacts.
- Allow changes to be managed first in services that are keen to proceed where buy in, involvement and likely success will be more easily achieved without resistance.
- By service most able to utilise web self access identified from previous e-gov work and from other authorities work
- By the high need status of a service where a significant service impact will be made.

Each of these routes has advantages and disadvantages in its identification, operation and outcome. Given the breadth and complexity of our organisation, we will balance these priorities, giving importance to those that will allow success to be seen quickly and be of value to services. Alongside this would be ensuring the change brings about efficiency and or improvement with progress in all access channels areas, as is appropriate to the service and it's front of house delivery. There is also a limit to how much change can be accommodated whilst ensuring the quality of our service delivery is not diminished and this balance has to be maintained.

### 19. Addressing the Change Agenda for Customer Access

Every department will eventually look at all their services and be ready to achieve savings or efficiency. They will follow the corporate processes agreed in delivering services to the public, using the range of available access channels and systems to their best advantage. If no advantage in efficiency or savings can be identified when reviewing a service or batch of services then no change should be made.

There is a need to encourage services to embrace change and this will be supported by the saving through efficiency helping meet ongoing budget requirements.

While this addresses the financial aspect of change as big an issue is the positive buy in from staff to such cultural change. The change projects need this and it will be encouraged not enforced but made clear it is not an optional initiative. This will be achieved by showing success in initial areas and using this to encourage more areas.

#### **Current Situation**

One Stop Shops are the face to face, front of house access channel for the Council. Their objective is to resolve as many enquiries as possible at first point of contact, without redirecting a customer to another service.

They provide a welcoming open environment where service users meet trained and expert staff in query resolution across a number of fields, who are also able to advise generally on most if not all related areas.

There are nine one stop shops at Bebington, Birkenhead, Eastham, Heswall, Moreton, New Brighton, Rock Ferry, Seacombe, West Kirby and four satellites units within the Jobcentre Plus offices at Bromborough, Hoylake, Liscard and Upton.

The siting of these one stop shops was agreed after looking at customer need and demand, local transport links and commercial areas. Where possible we have used available accommodation, with which local residents are already familiar, in order to reduce costs and maximise utilisation.

These sites are also important locally as a key contact with the local community and by linking the service of both the authority and its strategic partners they continue to improve their popularity and importance locally. Moving other service to cheaper access channels will allow the One Stop Shops to focus on key service areas that require face to face resolution.

#### **Information Points**

Information points are community based, and service smaller settlements than one stop shops. The purpose and function of the information points is to increase customer access and to complement the established one stop shop service. Information points are staffed units based in six Libraries, offering a direct call centre contact, self access to the internet and a non cash payment facility ~~or drop in box~~. Information Point staff provide information about all Council services, fully understanding the work that the one stop shops deliver, they sign post customers to these services where appropriate.

Information point staff have been initially trained to use the intranet and Internet to assist members of the public on any of the Council's services, as well as those of the recognised agencies. Through access to the Council's intranet and Internet they offer information and advice, and encourage and support customers to self access and complete applications on line. Future developments may include some verification services.

#### **Kiosks**

The use and siting of kiosks is a longer term goal given we have a network of one stop shop and information points. Kiosks must be secure and easy to use and we will make full use of available technology to develop as necessary simple touch-screen kiosks offering a quick and easy conduit to the Council services as well as to those of our key partner organisations.

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### **Partnership Arrangements**

We recognise that our customers often do not know who delivers the services they wish to access, and we therefore work closely with partners to deliver a seamless service to Wirral residents. One stop shop advisers can offer basic advice on a range of services including the Pension Service, Jobcentre Plus, the Inland Revenue and Surestart, many of which hold surgeries at our one stop shops. This means that our advisors can offer customers an appointment with a specialist advisor whilst assisting with Council related services, thus offering a seamless and accessible service to the customer. We have engaged the voluntary and community sector primarily through the Wirral Compact to help advice and assist in ongoing service development. The ongoing development of shared services is important for the area and will continue to play a key part in the development of our Customer Access Strategy.

### **Fair Debt**

One stop shop staff are trained in the delivery of debt advice providing preventative and early intervention advice. They can complete financial statements and administer the Council's fair debt policy.

### **Locally Based Projects**

Action Team for Jobs, part of Department for Work and Pensions, (DWP) has been an important and much accessed service within our sites over the last five years. Although that project has now ended the Northern Ways Incapacity Benefit project led by Reed in Partnership is operating successfully from Birkenhead and Rock Ferry sites and re-enforces the strong local links and customer awareness of One Stop Shops being the hub of such activities. The Northern Way project is time limited and Wirral is already involved in developing other such schemes that can successfully build on this experience and work.

### **Community Legal Service Partnership (CLSP)**

Wirral one stop shops are members of the Community Legal Service (CLS). This provides a network of legal information and help services that meet a recognised standard of quality. By improving access to information the CLS helps ensure people are able to find out about their rights and understand how to enforce them effectively

### **Job Centre Plus**

The Council has two Job Points at the Conway Centre and Rock Ferry one stop shops. The touch screen stand-alone kiosks allow direct access to the Job Centre Plus national database for job vacancies. They also feature what is referred to as a "warm phone" which is a free direct dial to Job Centre Direct and the Pensions Service and some other areas of Department for Work and Pensions, such as Disability Living Allowance. The phone also allows some access for a user to phone interested employers to jobs advertised in the system. These units are the same as those already installed in the Jobcentre Plus sites and complement the work we do with the organisation.

We will continue to explore the possibility of developing further partnership arrangements with other organisations including the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in order to further improve service accessibility in Wirral.

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### Call Centre

### Appendix 2

In line with customer demands the call centre will look to open where required from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday, as well as on Saturday mornings. We will continue to offer a 24 hour emergency cover for those services, which require one. We have a suite of telephone numbers by which customers access our services. It continues to expand access to a variety of services with defined handover points between front office advice and back office specialism. This is with the clear aim to achieve as much as possible "first time resolution at the front of house" which brings efficiency and clearer service to users.

The call centre aims to deliver as many services as possible through non-specialist advisors, thus improving flexibility and offering a more responsive service to the public. This improves customer access to information on a range of services that can be delivered simultaneously over the telephone from a central location. It eliminates misinterpretation of caller requests, which may sometimes result in transfer between departments and failure to reach the required destination first time.

The call centre liaises with departments to ensure where possible that peaks in demand for services are evenly distributed throughout the month / year, and develops service level agreements for all services that it delivers. This ensures that the services provided are consistent and of a high quality, and that the customer receives a seamless service.

Customer access to council payment services has been improved with the introduction of a 24 hr Automated Telephone Payments line, so that customers can pay their Council bills at their convenience.

We are aware that our customers call the council for advice on a range of services, some of which are not provided by the authority. We will therefore work with partner organisations to provide sign-posting and, where appropriate, advice to a range of services, which we think our customers, may ask us for. Services delivered by the call centre have and will continue to extend to include both internal and external customers to widen the scope of this facility. The development of joint working will also be seen with our involvement in government initiatives such as the Single Non Emergency Number (SNEN) Initiative.

### E-mail

The call centre already provides an email facility and we are extending this to provide a corporate service via the call centre. We will have effective monitoring and reporting to ensure response times meet the targets set in our customer guarantee.

### SMS

The authority is looking to further widen access to services with the introduction of SMS text messaging. This facility enables customers to text a range of enquiries into the call centre at low cost. Confirmation or updates can be relayed back to the customer using the same facility. This service can help engage young people and will increase communication with this group. SMS functionality can handle outgoing texts to alert customers of relevant issues building confidence in our customer service.

### Video Conferencing

Video Conferencing is currently available in Libraries connecting to the Call Centre.

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### Internet / Intranet Plans

### Appendix 3

The Internet will continue to grow in its use as a chosen access route and our Customer Access Strategy offers self service access as a viable access channel. Our website will be easy to use and be accessible to people with disabilities.

The Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM), the professional association for ICT managers working in the public sector, publishes an annual review of local authority websites and we want our website to accord with their top category. To help achieve this we will make using the Wirral Internet a more pleasant and fulfilling experience for the customer in the following ways:

- Improving Wirral's A-Z and standardising our A – Z entries in line with the government's Local Government Category List. Plain English will be used, avoiding departmental jargon. Entries will contain as much information as possible and, where appropriate links to useful sites. Together with the Public Relations team this will ensure the website reflects best practice in content.
- Navigation will be consistent throughout the site and the structure of Wirral.gov.uk will be apparent from the Home page.
- To encourage social inclusion, bridge the 'digital divide' Wirral customers have free access to P.C.s in our libraries with video conferencing facilities to increase accessibility.
- The Wirral web site will conform to accessibility standards for groups such as visually impaired, people with learning difficulties and persons whose first language is not English. The council will provide translation facilities on the Home page.
- Self-service will be encouraged where customers are confident that any personal or financial details they enter on Wirral's web site are secure. Electronic forms and electronic payment systems will be developed with built-in security.
- To encourage increased take-up Wirral will undertake the above measures in order to improve the customer's experience of the web site. The web site will be actively promoted in council publicity. Take-up will be regularly measured and the results published. We will consult with our customers, seeking feedback on the web site.
- Wirral provides public access to council meeting agendas, reports and minutes via the internet. The web site will be used to consult Wirral residents on local issues.
- Ensure that all future web developments are created as part of wirral.gov.uk rather than as separate websites
- We will use the web to market the council and the area

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- We will produce and maintain a web development plan, to be approved corporately that identifies which services are to be web enabled based on agreed prioritisation criteria

We will use the Wirral Internet to provide services at lower cost in the following ways:

- Implementing a Content Management System (CMS) that will bring improvements in the productivity of web authors and improve services by speeding up the rate of change on the site.
- Ensure that complete information about every service we provide is available on our Internet site, and that no information about a service is held elsewhere unless there are legislative reasons for doing so
- Make the Wirral Internet site transactional allowing customers or staff to use the Internet to deliver services more cheaply. Making most services “transactional” will involve developing intelligent forms to be completed by or on behalf of the public and allowing payment to be made over the Internet. We will ensure all transactions are treated as confidential and continue to ensure our online payments system is secure.
- We will provide online booking facilities for those services that require customers to book an amenity or outside visit.

We will use the Wirral Internet to improve the supply of information to the public and service providers in the following ways:

- We will keep all web site content up to date with the latest developments in the service and any change to the way it is delivered by the council.
- We will ensure all Internet content is checked for clarity and accuracy before it is published.
- We will put into place an Internet archive policy and process in order to be able to review information and advice we will have issued in the past. The Councils Record Retention Policy will govern the length of time obsolete information is kept.
- We will publish availability targets for the Wirral Internet site as well as a historical record of how well we are meeting these targets.
- Wirral Internet sites will, as they are redeveloped, comply with the usability and accessibility guidelines. This will include replacing forms in PDF format with e-forms to comply with accessibility guidelines.
- Implement an interface between web forms and the CRM that will enable customers to raise service requests. amend them and track their progress.
- Ensure that local developments are in line with national web programmes

## Wirral Council - Customer Access Strategy

### KEY MESSAGES

### APPENDIX 4

1. We will help increase customer satisfaction and be responsive to internal and external customers
2. We will have choice in access channels, which are joined-up and co-ordinated
3. We will increase the number of services delivered by the Front of House
4. We will increase partnership working
5. We will be effective, efficient and value for money services
6. We will help decrease duplication in working practices and help services cut overall costs
7. We will have a fully accessible internet offering transactional services
8. We will promote self-access to encourage the take up of cheaper channels
9. We will exploit our CRM system and increase integration of IT systems
10. We will increase first point of contact resolution
11. We will rationalise public reception and access points
12. We will continue to give full focus to received written communication.



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### HOW WE WILL MAKE THESE KEY MESSAGES A REALITY      APPENDIX 5

1. By delivering services in response to customer consultation and feedback.
2. We will address equality and diversity by assessment of customer need.
3. We will have a uniform approach to achieving; wherever practicable; consistent and appropriate service levels with plans to develop additional access channels e.g. email & SMS Text.
4. We will have plans to increase relevant partnership working with voluntary & community sector organisations and government bodies within the area.
5. We will know current cost of services and develop plans for end to end service change and include front of house overall delivery, service efficiencies and decreased duplication. Back of house, services will understand the cost of front of house services through the re-charging mechanism.
6. We will focus on internet/self-access development including appropriate non mediated access.
7. We will maximise first contact resolution by continuing to develop a knowledge base and increase the ability of front of house to fully address customer requirements and have agreed hand off's to specialists. This will include the ability of the Internet to offer on line updates.
8. CRM and integrated legacy systems will be used to support Business Process Re-Engineering where appropriate to bring added value to individual services and the wider corporate agenda for customer service.
9. We will gain corporate agreement, working alongside asset management to rationalise public access, which will be achieved as more services move to co-ordinated front of house access channels.
10. We will increase the number of services delivered by the front of house via all access channels whether mediated or non mediated by consideration of relevant services through a combination of volume, ease of transfer, efficiency, likely savings and sectional ability to undertake change, whilst acknowledging capacity of the services and the change team to initiate volume of change in a reasonable timescale.

## Wirral Council - Customer Access Strategy

### SERVICES BEING DEVELOPED AND DELIVERED IN 2006/2007      APPENDIX 6

<p><b>Streetscene</b> (Technical Services)</p>	<p>Extension of current services to include following service areas launched in February 2007</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illuminated street signs</li> <li>• Parking (on street disable parking bays &amp; access protection markings)</li> <li>• Roads and highways works</li> <li>• Roads and Highways closures and diversions</li> <li>• Drainage (gully problems)</li> </ul> <p>Environmental Services Waste Contract (for August 2006) including moving existing services from MVM system onto CRM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street Cleansing</li> <li>• Household waste -domestic bins</li> <li>• Household re-cycling-green &amp; kitchen waste</li> <li>• Household re-cycling-dry waste</li> <li>• Commercial waste</li> </ul> <p>Environmental service enforcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fly-tipping, graffiti; fly-posting, abandoned vehicles, sharps</li> <li>• Coastal matters</li> <li>• Public rights of way</li> <li>• Road safety (including school crossing patrols)</li> <li>• Street naming and numbering</li> <li>• Bridges and structures</li> </ul> <p>This will assist this service area as a more complete change project to show to other service areas</p>
<p><b>Recruitment</b> (Corporate Services)</p>	<p>Any change to handling at front of house would impact on EAT but efficiency gained is linked to how we send out information and improve the service to applicants. Other authorities have found this a relatively easy move. Improve efficiency of service due to increased accessibility / immediate response fully utilising the Call Centre. Project re-launched and to be moved to FOH for requests / receipting.</p>
<p><b>Cross Cutting - Complaints</b></p>	<p>Service delivered via the CRM for all service areas excluding Adult Social Services</p>
<p><b>Interview Logging</b> (Finance)</p>	<p>To capture details regarding interviews at OSS</p> <p>Requirements specified and CRM solution in development – potentially requires assistance from Fujitsu in system build but not anticipated as a major project. Development work needs to be carried out asap to facilitate go-live April after staff training (key factor to ensure go-live in April).</p>

**NEW SERVICES TO BE COMPLETED IN 2007/2008**

<p><b>Cross Cutting - Life Events</b></p>	<p>Bring together in co-ordinated way to help people on first contact and this would include such areas as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of address</li> <li>• Bereavement</li> <li>• Births</li> <li>• Marriages</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Starting work</li> </ul> <p>Development of on-line forms to facilitate self service will also be used by both Front and Back of House services.</p> <p>Initial Information packs in hard copy for bereavement will be ready by March 2007 with other events ready in 2007/08 along with on line forms.</p>
<p><b>Wirral Homes</b> (Regeneration)</p>	<p>Extension of mediated service from One Stop Shop base to Call Centre handling of enquiries to link to established web site information.</p>
<p><b>Review of CADT</b> (Department of Adult Social Services)</p>	<p>DASS is undertaking an end to end re-design of referral, assessment and care management processes with support from the Department of Health Care Services Efficiencies Delivery Consultants. As part of this a full review of the role and function of CADT will be undertaken in 2007 using corporate change management, project management and process re-engineering methodology. This review will ensure the requirements of this strategy are met including the reviewing of web information, and on-line forms such as on-line referral form to improve information available at initial contact (whether by phone, face to face or web).</p> <p>CADT currently access CRM and use SWIFT.</p>
<p><b>Licensing</b> (Regeneration)</p>	<p>Maximise customer accessibility to the service and improve customer experience. Potential SRE savings in closure of reception/staffing.</p> <p>Phase 1 – Utilising Protos for service delivery will be ready by March 2007 with Phase 2 – Utilising CRM for service delivery to include back office (enforcement process) following in 2007/08</p>

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<p><b>Adaptations</b></p> <p>(Adult Social Services &amp; Regeneration)</p>	<p>DASS Occupational Therapy Team, Regeneration Housing Action Team along with corporate colleagues has undertaken an end to end mapping exercise on the process for minor and major adaptations. This was to refresh the mapping that was undertaken as part of the 1 Business Re-Engineering processes begun in October 2006. Based on evidence collected a set of jointly agreed solutions and actions to problems has been identified and will be implemented in 2007.</p> <p>Some of the actions which impact on the Customer Access Strategy are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People who are self funding need to be advised that they can be supported by Home Improvement Agency for assistance and independent OT assessment is available rather than assessment through DASS OT assessment. This would be another option people could choose to take</li><li>• HAT team will be using the CRM system shortly and through the use of CRM in the call centre and one stop shops asking about financial circumstances will quickly identify entitlement to DFG support linked to housing benefit</li><li>• Develop and information leaflet on the options to access minor adaptations including purchasing privately which will provide links to other relevant websites, shop locations etc.</li></ul> <p>The principal objective is to have one IT system which would cut across all departments involved to allow visibility of the process from beginning to end. Scoping study identified a number of issues which are being addressed. DASS have received a first draft of an options appraisal on the use of multiple systems. Currently the OT team use SWIFT and will be using ESCR from May 2007.</p> <p>Project is being progressed by introducing the CRM into the Home Adaptations Team inc. the functions of the Home Improvement Agency and the Handyman Service.</p> <p>Phase 1 - replace the functionality of MVM with the CRM linking in with the EAM to provide an end to end solution within HAT.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the project will be to develop a mobile solution and to exploit Documentum.</p>
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<p><b>Registrars</b>  (Corporate Services)</p>	<p>Booking appointments via cc/oss.  Information on web  Reviewing service availability</p>
<p><b>Pest Control</b> (Regeneration)  <b>District</b> (Regeneration)</p>	<p>Make service more accessible by using the CRM instead of MVM. SRE review of processes offers definite savings in Admin time/missed visits etc.  Initial development that could be continued to include whole of Environmental Services. Potential savings from SRE and removal of MVM.</p>
<p><b>Technical Services</b>  <b>Building Control</b>          <b>Development Control</b>          <b>Streetscene</b></p>	<p>Letter monitoring set up on the CRM (technical services requirement) further work required to include email monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic study completed 2005</li> <li>○ All services mapped – baseline of current processes</li> <li>○ Change request submitted for live Site inspection request improvements Oct 2005 / all development work completed – still waiting to go live.</li> <li>○ PROTOS processes delivered by FOH – developed on OBDEV4 / documented.</li> <li>○ Re-launch required with department for full SRE exercise / owners defined (inc. end to end process for site inspections)</li> </ul> <p><b>Enforcement 55%</b> - Change request submitted Oct 2005 / all development work completed except Discoverer reports – still to go live.</p> <p><b>Planning 20%</b></p> <p><b>Conservation &amp; Listed Buildings – 20%</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic study completed 2005</li> <li>○ All services mapped – baseline of current processes</li> <li>○ PROTOS processes delivered by FOH – developed on OBDEV4 / documented.</li> <li>○ Re-launch required with department for full SRE exercise / owners defined.</li> </ul> <p>Phase 2 launched Feb 07.</p> <p>This will assist this service area as a more complete change project to show to other service areas</p>

## Wirral Council - Customer Access Strategy

	<p><b>Operational Services</b> – rollout auto-scheduling that has been implemented within Flagging section to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bitmac</li> <li>• Road Lining</li> <li>• Engineering</li> </ul> <p>Possible work to be undertaken regarding Enterprise Asset Management system use.</p>
<p><b>Library renewals</b>  (Cultural Services / Regeneration)</p>	<p>High volume calls – to maximise the use of the call centre.</p> <p>82,000 phone completions per annum, which could be undertaken at front of house. Longer term this needs to be encouraged to self-service. Currently Education and Cultural Services indicate that if the process moved to front of house there would be no staff reductions on any site given cover issues, so for efficiency gain, back office BPR is needed. However, there may be some movement given the introduction of Information Points, which will attract people to libraries, and the loss of renewals could be offset by people using the Information Point with consequential increased usage in the library service.</p> <p>85% - as service mapped for front house delivery – review required on publicising service availability.</p>

PROPOSED NEW SERVICES TO BE COMMENCED IN 2007/2008

<p><b>Leisure Bookings</b> (Cultural Services / Regeneration)</p>	<p>Whilst contingent on a new booking system accessible at front of house, it is easy to take on but have the same resource transfer issues as seen at Libraries. The need to promote self-service also includes Acre Lane, Halls, Theatre tickets and events whilst CRM cannot meet departmental requirements for sports bookings.</p> <p>20% - Leisure Services mapped on Protos for I &amp; A for I &amp; A to be delivered by CC / OSS Strategic Study completed 2005</p>
<p><b>Theatre tickets / Tourism</b> (Cultural Services / Regeneration)</p>	<p>Sales and information– there may be limited immediate direct efficiency without BPR but improved service would be provided. The corporate front of house units to offer tourism information</p>
<p><b>Environmental Health</b> (Regeneration)</p>	<p>Extension of work specifically in areas ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Hygiene (Health &amp; Safety)</li> <li>• Inspections</li> <li>• Infectious Diseases (Notifications)</li> <li>• Drains &amp; Sewerage</li> <li>• Pollution control</li> <li>• Dog wardens</li> <li>• Environmental Health</li> <li>• Trading Standards</li> <li>• Statutory nuisance</li> </ul> <p>District (&amp; Licensing) is opening out these other services for SRE and potential use of CRM within Regen dept. (who are keen to utilise the services of the team/CRM and move services to FoH).</p>
<p><b>Cross Cutting - Complaints</b></p>	<p>Service extended via the CRM for Adult Social Services and looking to improve Ombudsman complaints procedure.</p>
<p><b>Children &amp; Young Peoples Services</b> (CYPD)</p>	<p>Review of areas for extension to front of house handling including Truancy, Schools General Information and Youth Groups</p>
<p><b>Children's Service Information</b> (CYPD)</p>	<p>Link to developing Children's centres to ensure no duplication and maximised use of authority co-ordinated access channels without affecting service delivery. To maximise use of authority co-ordinated access channels, and link into the development of Children's centres</p>
<p><b>Revenues &amp; Benefits</b> (Finance)</p>	<p>Extension of Benefits Council Tax Business Rates and Sundry Debtors work utilising CRM.</p>

## Wirral Council - Customer Access Strategy