

# Walsall Council Customer Experience Strategy 2021 – 2026

## We want to do things right, first time, every time, and make services accessible, to help reduce inequalities and maximise potential.

The Council's Corporate Plan is the golden thread which runs through everything we do. Our corporate values highlight how the Council works with local communities/Customers and influences choice and behaviours through our values of **Listening, Accountable, Collaborative, Honest, Supportive, Respect, Empowering, Aspirational, Responsive, Fair**. The Council's values and behaviours are central to everything the Council delivers through a culture of continuous improvement. The corporate plan sets out our 5 EPICC priorities (Economic Growth, People, Internal Focus, Children and Communities) which continue to be our focus and are underpinned by 10 resident focused outcomes. We strive to increase performance, efficiency and champion the design of services to meet the needs of our Customers. The Council is committed to creating an environment that provides opportunities for all residents and communities to fulfil their potential and deliver resilient communities.

### We want services in the Council to:

- Understand what Customers want and deliver an excellent Customer service experience
- Be fair, resilient, and create value for all the diverse communities we serve
- Learn from best practice and when things need to improve make changes quickly
- Create a culture which puts Customers first and central within all of our services
- Be flexible and make reasonable adjustments for some of our service users
- Up skill and invest in our staff to meet our Customers changing needs

### Our Customers want us to:

- Listen to the request they make and understand them as people
- To deal with enquiries quickly and efficiently
- To keep us updated on enquiries
- To make processes easy to understand and services accessible either online or through other channels

### As a Customer we need you to:

- Feedback to us about your Customer experience
- Treat us with respect and politeness
- Provide us with any information we ask for
- Work with us on issues we may need to resolve together



Our customers get in touch with us in many ways depending on their needs and preferences. As a Council we are committed to providing services which are easy to use, simple, effective, and where we can't help, we want to direct you to someone who can. We aim to provide tailored support where needed and understand that sometimes this means we need to provide services in a different way. In the last few years, people have preferred to access our services on their mobile phone or computer as this is quicker and has proven to be more valuable. By improving our online and digital service offer we can help even more people and deliver more Resilient Communities. This means supporting residents to become more self-sufficient by allowing them to access services via new 24/7 digital self-serve pathways. We recognise that some residents will not be able to use digital channels without support so we will work with our voluntary sector partners to provide the right face to face support where needed.

## Did you know that it costs the Council:



**£17**  
for each face to  
face transaction



**£14**  
to deal with  
a letter



**£12**  
to deal with  
an email



**£5**  
for each  
telephone call



**£1**  
for each online  
transaction



**10p**  
for a  
website visit

The Council deals with a large number of Customer enquiries each year. Broken down into different channels, on average there are:

**8,000** new emails received a month.

Approx. **13,000** calls a month to our Customer Experience Centre.

Approx. **24,000** Walsall Connected contacts.

**7,099,233** page views on our website.



## Who are our Customers?



The Council works with a wide range of people across Walsall, and our Customers include everyone living, working, volunteering, investing, studying, running a business.

### Our Customers contact us for many different reasons, including to:

- Get information from us, or give us information
- Report issues
- Apply for, book or arrange services
- Make payments or buy our services
- Access specific help and support

## Our Customer Promise we want to be GREAT



**G**et things done quickly

**R**espect our customers and the communities we serve

**E**xcellent customer service, first time, every time

**A**lign the way we work with customers, partners and internal services

**T**ell people about our services and be clear about what we don't do.

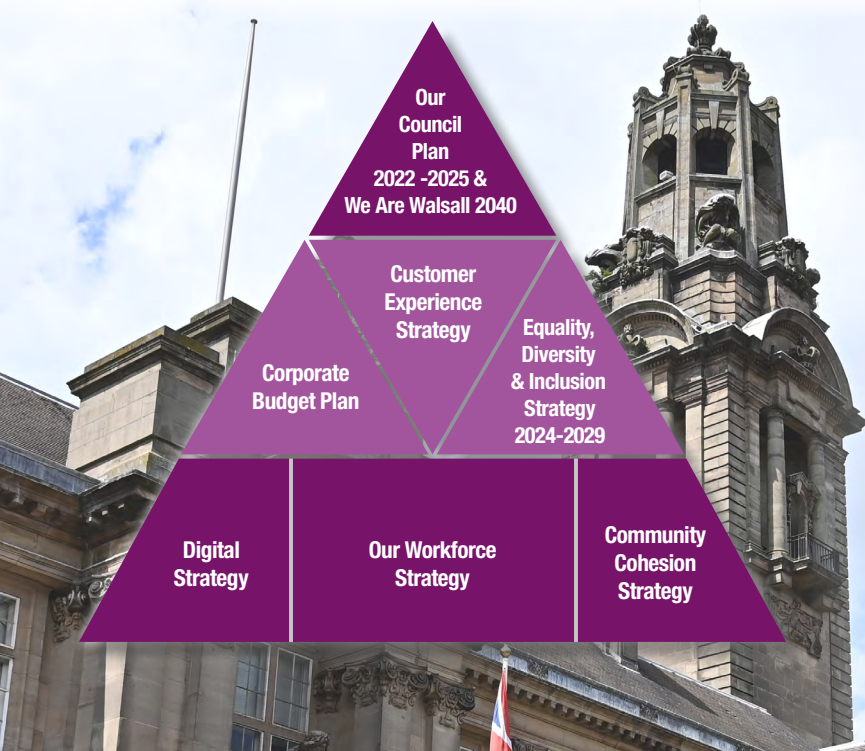
## Key facts and figures

Walsall is a diverse borough. We serve around 120,000 households. We have an estimated population of 286,700 (ONS 2020 Mid-Year Estimates), comprised of approximately 21.7% children 0-15 (62,300), 60.8% working-aged 16-64 (174,300), and 17.5% 65 years & over (50,100), giving a dependency ratio of 0.64 dependents to every 1 working age adult. The population is expected to increase to more than 300,000 by 2030 and to more than 320,000 by 2040. The biggest increases are expected in the older age groups, with over 65s expected to make up around 20% of the population by 2040.

According to the 2021 Census, White British people make up 71% of Walsall's population. With 29% of the population from minority ethnic groups, Walsall is more ethnically diverse than the national average, with 19% Asian, 5% Black, 3% Mixed and 2% Other.

As our population grows and people live longer, there is increasing need for many Council services, which places additional pressure on our finances. We can help this investment go further if we improve the quality of our digital access points and support residents to switch from more expensive channels such as face to face and telephone to self-serve options via our website wherever possible.

## Where does this Customer Strategy fit?



## Quotes from Customers and staff about how to improve Customer services

We need improved systems, better quality and consistency from staff

We are Customers like everyone else and just want to be helped

Ensure we say what we do and positively improve public perception of the Council

Take ownership of the issue from the first point of contact and work with internal services and our partners

Provide the services that Customers want. Act upon consultation responses and involve Customers in service design

## Resident/Customer feedback

### Our Public Survey Showed we need to:

- Enable Customers to make informed choices and decisions about the services they receive – **52% Strongly agree**
- Provide consistent high quality Customer experience across all services – **46% Strongly agree**
- Deliver value for money services – **47% Strongly agree**
- Involve Customers in the design of services – **37% Strongly Agree**
- Be a resilient and transparent Council – **52% Strongly Agree**

### Feedback from the Telephone Survey Showed we need to offer:

- More joined up services
- Digital self-service
- Website accuracy
- Meaningful telephone contact
- Regular updates for Customers

### Key Feedback from Young People suggest they need:

- Fast/ efficient responses
- Quality of the service and support
- To have a named contact person
- Advisers that listen and understand what is needed

### If we do this right we will improve:

- Service user outcomes and Customer experience
- Employee satisfaction and commitment
- Service efficiency and performance
- Resilience in Partnership arrangements and engagement

### Customers said it's important that:

- Information provided by the Council is accurate and up to date – **81%**
- Self-serve and online options are available – **53%**
- It is easy to contact / access the Council – **68%**
- Council services work in a joined up manner – **57%**
- The Customer experience is consistently high quality across all Council services – **58%**
- You have the option to speak to someone face to face – **46%**
- Requirements and needs are understood at the first point of contact – **55%**
- The Council is clear about what can and can't be done – **71%**
- Queries are managed efficiently and effectively by connecting you to the right person – **62%**

### Feedback from our Easy Read Survey showed disabled or vulnerable Customers need:

- Access to face to face advice
- More local based services
- Accessible consultation
- Realistic alternative formats
- To build a trusted relationships as past negative experiences will shape how people approach us




### We will measure this by:

- Capturing regular feedback and learning from it
- Making our feedback methods so everyone has the opportunity to take part
- Setting performance measures and developing an action plan which helps us to improve Customer experience for all



# Progress so far

Following your feedback, what we've done and are going to do to meet the needs of our residents, local businesses, our partners and Walsall Council employees.

Our Outcomes	What does that mean for Customers	What we have done
 <p><b>Excellent customer experience for all of our Residents, local businesses and partners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers understand what they can expect from us.</li> <li>We are easy to deal with.</li> <li>Aim to get it right first time, every time.</li> <li>Easy to understand policies and processes which are clear and encourage self-service.</li> <li>Staff focused on providing good service and outcomes for Customers.</li> <li>End to end services designed from the Customer perspective.</li> <li>Improve Customer satisfaction.</li> <li>Improve the Council's reputation as a Proud and resilient organisation.</li> <li>Increased investment/commercial opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In February 2024, we delivered a new Customer Portal for eleven of our Clean and Green processes.</li> <li>Residents can also use the Customer Portal and their MyAccount to provide Comments, Compliments and Complaints.</li> <li>Residents can now get updates on "Report It", "Book It" and "Apply for It" processes through their MyAccount online account.</li> <li>Over 46,000 Residents have registered for a MyAccount online.</li> <li>We have refreshed our corporate values and embedded a change framework that supports enhanced: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement (ADKAR).</li> <li>Residents can now receive Call Backs from our Customer Experience Centre, to save them having to wait on the telephone in a queue during peak times.</li> <li>Our Customer Advisers now have access to Agent Assist to support them in providing our Residents with consistent, accurate, timely, and up-to-date information when they contact us.</li> <li>We invested in cutting edge telephony technology to increase the efficiency and performance of our Customer Experience Centre team when providing assistance to our Residents.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Increase digital contact from Customers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is easy to find on the Council's website and is up to date.</li> <li>Customers can apply for services, inform us of changes, request information and pay quickly and safely online.</li> <li>Services are designed so Customers can use their own devices.</li> <li>Customers can complete most tasks digitally from start to finish, without having to contact the Council directly.</li> <li>Help those who need it to get online and get the help they need.</li> <li>Customers and staff are involved in the design of digital public services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have updated our website to help ensure that it is compliant with the new accessibility standards.</li> <li>We have developed a digital access route for some of our most high-volume Resident needs.</li> <li>WALIS the Walsall Council chatbot was introduced in Spring 2023 to help support Residents by answering their most frequently asked questions.</li> <li>In August 2024 we launched an enhanced Web Messenger service in WALIS the chatbot to allow Residents to chat live with a Customer Adviser.</li> <li>From August 2024, our Residents can now use live messenger to chat to a Customer Adviser in over 100 languages. This is to ensure that all our Residents are able to easily communicate with the Council in their preferred language.</li> <li>Our Walsall Connected network of 29 partners ensures that our Residents can get face-to-face support in locations throughout the borough to support them with accessing our digital services.</li> <li>Through Walsall Connected we are working with libraries, community and voluntary sector partner's, to help increase digital skills amongst Residents and leverage additional social value from our supply chain. 87% of our Residents who used the digital support service felt that they had gained knowledge, skill and understanding.</li> <li>Since Walsall Connected was established in 2022, Residents have accessed our services over 23,000 times through our partnerships and 97% rated the service as Very Good.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Act on service user feedback to improve service delivery</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to our Customers and learn how to make things great for all.</li> <li>Consultation will be accessible and everyone will have the opportunity to take part.</li> <li>Customer engagement will become more independent and be able to have the right to make choices.</li> <li>Develop some customer service led performance measures.</li> <li>Customer feedback will help improve Council services and influencing the way we view things.</li> <li>Keep Customers well informed about our services, and any changes or issues which may affect them.</li> <li>Work with our partners in Walsall so we can join up services where needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have developed Resident satisfaction measures across the Customer Experience Centre to enable us to gain regular feedback from Residents.</li> <li>We have introduced Business Insights technology to evaluate Resident feedback to enable us to improve the design and delivery of our services.</li> <li>A new Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints online process was introduced in February 2024, to improve response times for Residents.</li> <li>We used Resident data to proactively award Household Support Fund to help over 15,000 children living in low-income families with essentials during school holidays.</li> <li>We have employed new Knowledge Management specialists to help us to analyse Resident feedback and use it to improve the services that we provide.</li> <li>SMS reminders to Residents for Occupation Therapy has reduced failure to attend appointments by 78%.</li> <li>All of our staff undertake continuous development to better understand the individual needs of Residents, through training in unconscious bias, neurodiversity, racism and our armed services covenant.</li> </ul>

**Our Corporate Priorities feed into our Outcomes**

**E**conomic  
**P**eople  
**I**nternal Focus  
**C**hildren  
**C**ommunities

# What is next?

## Our “GREAT” Customer promise

## What we are planning to ensure we meet our “GREAT” Customer Promise



### Get things done quickly

- We are adding additional digital services to our Customer Portal with Highways processes being added early 2025 and we are planning to add Bereavements, Regulatory Services and Commercial Waste.
- We will improve the efficiency and accessibility of our services by enabling our Residents to access key services through one single sign-on to their online accounts. Work on this will begin early 2025.
- Through publicising and promoting the Walsall Council MyAccount throughout 2025, we will inform more Residents of the ability for them to “Report It”, “Book It” and “Apply for It” online 24/7 without the need to telephone or email the Council.



### Respect our customers and the communities we serve

- Using Resident feedback, in 2025 we will improve our Walsall Wellbeing Directory so that Residents can easily find the support they require from local organisations, groups and societies to improve their personal wellbeing and to assist our staff when supporting Residents by phone, live chat (Web Messenger) or email.
- In 2026 we plan to develop a Customer Accessibility standard to ensure our residents are co-designers of our services, that all of our communication is fully accessible and that consultations are inclusive, fair and equitable.
- We will provide consistent online forms, that are concise, easy to understand, and collect all the relevant information at the first point of contact by the end of 2026.
- Following Resident feedback, we are redesigning the way we consult with Residents to ensure that all of our Residents can access Council consultations and are supported where needed to ensure equity of accessibility. This work will be ongoing during 2025.
- Through connecting our different software platforms, we will reduce the number of times a Resident must log in to separate systems within the Council. Our aim to be to move towards a ‘Single Sign On’ by the end of 2026.



### Excellent customer service, first time, every time

- It is our aim to increase the number of service areas that Residents can access directly through our Customer Experience Centre so that we can provide excellent service, first time, every time. This will be ongoing during 2025 and 2026.
- By the end of 2025, we will have reduced the number of published telephone numbers for Customer Service and reduced the number of Council email addresses so that contacting the Council is easier and less confusing.
- We aim to introduce regular mystery shopping, and a Resident panel, to support future service development throughout 2026.
- Through the live customer feedback that we now receive, during 2025 we will continue to actively review and improve the services we provide to our Residents and local businesses.
- We will work towards developing a Council-wide view of our Residents to ensure they get the best possible advice and guidance and financial support. This has already begun with Free School Meals and we will develop this further by the end of 2026.
- We are reviewing the Corporate Complaints policy, and updating our digital process for managing complaints, with associated performance measures by the end of 2024.



### Align the way we work with customers, partners and internal services

- We plan to review Resident and business communication content, whether digital or traditional paper format, to ensure that they meet accessibility standards, and are offered in alternative formats. This has been partially delivered and as part of working towards this, we now have our Customer Engagement staff undertaking accessibility training and will complete this by the Summer of 2025.
- We will take a preventative approach, using Social Prescribing, when supporting Residents, exploring services not just within the Council but within the local community, that are best placed to support our Residents. Walsall Connected and our Knowledge Base for our WALIS Chatbot, will be instrumental in delivering this aim and improvements will be made throughout 2025.
- The Customer Experience Centre is supporting Council internal services by providing expertise in the creation of a robust, centralised knowledge base to enable them to deliver an enhanced customer experience. The knowledge base is information used to inform and guide our customer service to enhance our Resident experience by providing accurate, relevant and up to date. information. Throughout 2025 we will review all of the questions our Residents frequently ask us and ensure that we provide clear, concise and useful responses.
- We are creating an organisational development programme that supports staff to consistently place Residents at the heart of all decision-making by the Summer of 2026.
- We are automating the registration for pupils who are entitled to Free School Meals by using software to prevent parents and carers from having to manually apply for this benefit. New technology has already been introduced to support this and will complete this work by the Autumn of 2025.



### Tell people about our services and be clear about what we don't do

- We will publish our Service Standards and introduce corporate performance measures to monitor compliance and ensure these are available to the public by the end of 2025.
- We are working throughout 2025 with professional colleagues to understand the most effective way of communicating with our Residents and to make certain that our messages are clear, effective and relevant.
- Our work with our Behavioural Scientist team and consultation with Residents will ensure that we optimise the co-design and delivery of our services to best meet the needs of our Residents. We will continue to make improvements throughout 2025 and 2026.