



Breckland Council
Customer Access Strategy
2009 -2012



Breckland –
a better place, a brighter future

*Note to colleagues
This document needs your views*

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

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Foreword

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Welcome to the 'Customer access Strategy for 2009 – 2012.

The strategy sets out our vision for customer services and how we intend to improve on our existing customer access arrangements and how these improvements will be achieved.

At Breckland Council we strive to provide high standards of service together with value for money for local people and our mission statement has been chosen to reflect this;

“Putting the customer at the heart of everything we do and to view the world from our customers’ perspective; we need to put ourselves in our Citizens’ Shoes”

We believe we must continue to work with feedback to improve where necessary, and to do this we hold regular Customer Forums, consult the Citizens’ Panel, conduct quarterly Customer Satisfaction Surveys and participate in road shows across the district. To ensure social inclusion we have adopted a “design for all” approach by providing multiple access channels at times and locations convenient to our customers.

The purpose of our Customer Access Strategy is to explain what we will do to get customer service right first time, every time, at the first point of contact. It sets out our priorities and the outcomes we hope to achieve for local people.

Kay Fisher

Councillor Kay Fisher

Executive member for Environmental Well-being and Customer Contact



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Executive member for
Environmental Well-Being
and Customer Contact

Information

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

The strategy is a clear and ambitious programme to deliver significant improvements to customer access to services and is supported by a number of related strategies, including:-

- Service Plans
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Business Plan
- IEG5 & 6 Statement (explain what these are as this may not be understood by customers)
-

Background

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Our Customer Contact Centre went live January 2005 with an aim of 80% resolution of customer queries at the first point of contact which was achieved through customer focused and multi-skilled staff. A phased approach was undertaken answering 'frequently asked questions' and 'easy to answer questions' The goal was to migrate all services into the Contact Centre is this still the goal? If not may be best to leave out?

- January 2005 – Benefits, Council tax & National Non-Domestic Rates – Compliments & Complaints, General Enquiries
- April 2005 – Environmental Services
- May 2005 – Planning & Building Control and Environmental Planning
- March 2006 – Electoral Services

Within our 5 Market Towns the Customer Service Centres have evolved so that not only do we take in and verify documents for Housing & Benefits claims, we now provide ease of access to services, ensuring we offer the same level of service to customers whether they choose to access our services by telephone, through the website or face to face.

- Council Tax arrangements - from moving in, moving out, taking debit card payments to setting up a Direct Debit payment arrangement
- Validation of concessionary travel passes and processing documentation
- Webcam facility in Attleborough, Swaffham, Thetford & Watton for photos for concessionary bus passes
- Ability to report fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, missed bins, request bulky waste collections and garden waste bins.
- Provision of Council information, leaflets and application forms

Our website was re-launched in December 2005 and was greatly improved with easier access to information. This is an area we will continue to focus on through this strategy..

A high level of Customer Service is already being delivered and our staff will continue to their skills to implement new ideas for improvements around Customer Service delivery. It is important to learn from others whilst sharing our successes together with solutions to problems that we have overcome.

It is not only the Customer Service Team that strives to provide excellent Customer Service, the culture for all service areas within the Council is that the customer comes first and we continuously aim to exceed customer's expectations.

The Vision

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

The purpose of our strategy is to set out our vision for customer access to services, how we propose to improve on our existing customer access arrangements and setting out our plans on how improvement will be achieved.

This strategy will assist us to resource our plans for delivering customer services and how we will communicate our vision and the plans to the public, businesses, employees and Elected Members. The strategy also provides a key focus for the Central Government Electronic Government Agenda

Our vision for excellence in customer access:

“We aim to get customer service right first time every time at the first point of contact – wherever that happens – assisting, informing and reacting swiftly to demands.”

This vision clearly supports our values and aims which are defined within our

Business Plan growing together 2008 – 14

Accessible, Accountable, Democratic, Equality, Equitable, Ethical, Open & Sustainable

Could make reference to the Business Plan priority of ‘Your Council Your Services?’

- Fairness: our aspirations are to ensure equality of opportunity and choice through all our services. The approach of this Strategy is clearly to provide fair access to services for all communities within the district.
- Transformation: our aspirations are to transform the way in which the public interacts with, and benefits from, local public services.
- Quality Services: the strategy will continue to drive improvement in access to services. It will develop and set standards for improving personal choice for customers as well as improved efficiency and quality, building on current high levels.
- Relevant services: designed around the need of our customer using the understanding from engagement and dialogue with users putting the customer first
- Accessible: through modern coordinated delivery channels in locations, at times and in ways which ensure social inclusion, minimising where possible the need to travel.
- Consistent & Accurate: using information from one central source, kept up to date, relevant and effective to ensure the same level of service and same information available to all and that all staff put themselves in the Citizens’ Shoes

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Strategy Benefits

Implementing this strategy is intended to provide customers with equality of access to all services and to achieve our vision. The overall service to customers will improve and administration will be reduced. Delivering the objectives will result in an increase in efficiency and provide the opportunity to take other costs out of the system.

Some of the benefits will include:

For customers:

- Improved Customer satisfaction
- Greater choice and convenience
- Better customer service and provision of information
- Resolution of queries at the first point of contact
- Joined-up services
- No unnecessary bureaucracy
- Services accessible to all, in addition to the market town customer service centres, the aim is to introduce mobile working ensuring the rural communities are not disadvantaged
- Greater involvement in the design, review and evaluation of services.
- Listening to and working with your honest and valuable feedback

For staff

- Improved staff satisfaction
- Customer-focused organisation
- Led by confident, attentive and supportive people
- Part of a progressive organisation which is modern, fresh and entrepreneurial
- An 'invest to save' approach to customer services
- Empowerment and involvement in shaping the improved service by attending Business Improvement workshops - staff use system thinking processes to change they way we work
- Improved functionality of customer service centres
- Ease of reporting management information
- Continuous process improvement
- Better productive time to focus on the customer.

For Breckland

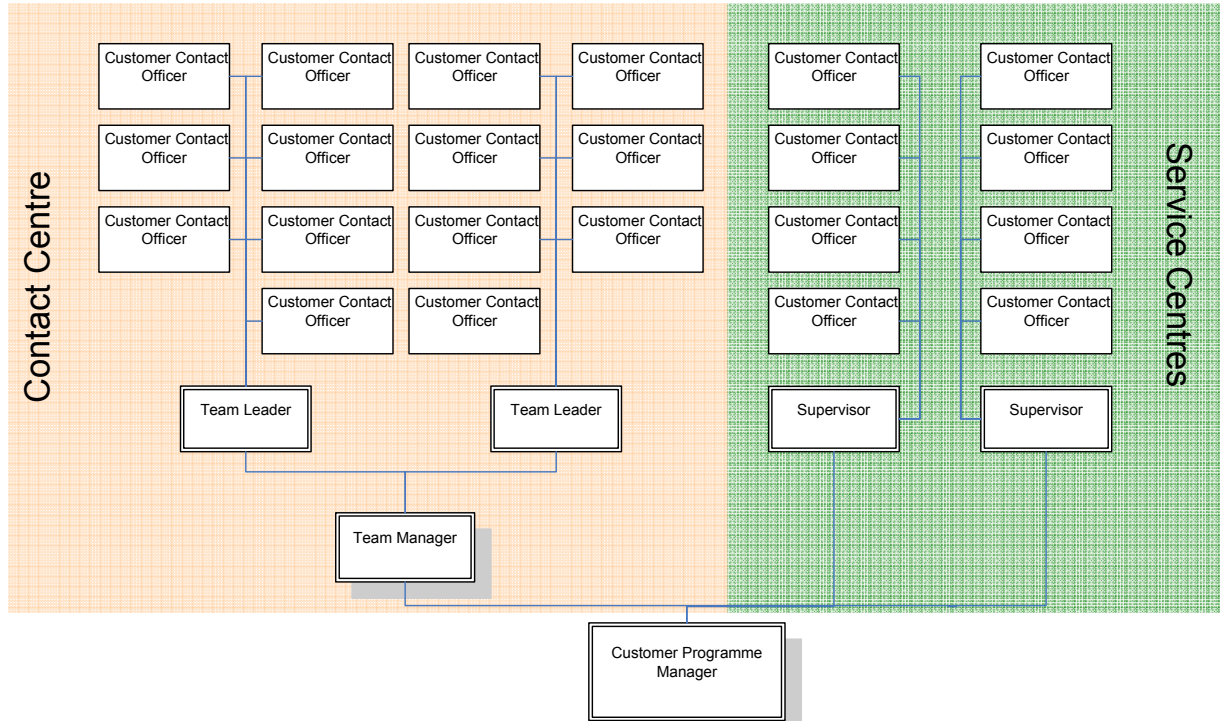
- Clear focus on the customer and services targeted to reflect need
- Access channels that are 'state of the art', including a full range of electronic services
- Efficiency gains and better value for money
- Re-investment
- Improved relationships with key stakeholders and other service providers
- Higher customer satisfaction ratings
- Transferability value of redesigned services for entrepreneurial activity
- Improved quality of life.

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Breckland Council Customer Service Standards

Our existing Customer Service Standards support our vision to ensure that our customers are at the heart of our actions.

Our Customer



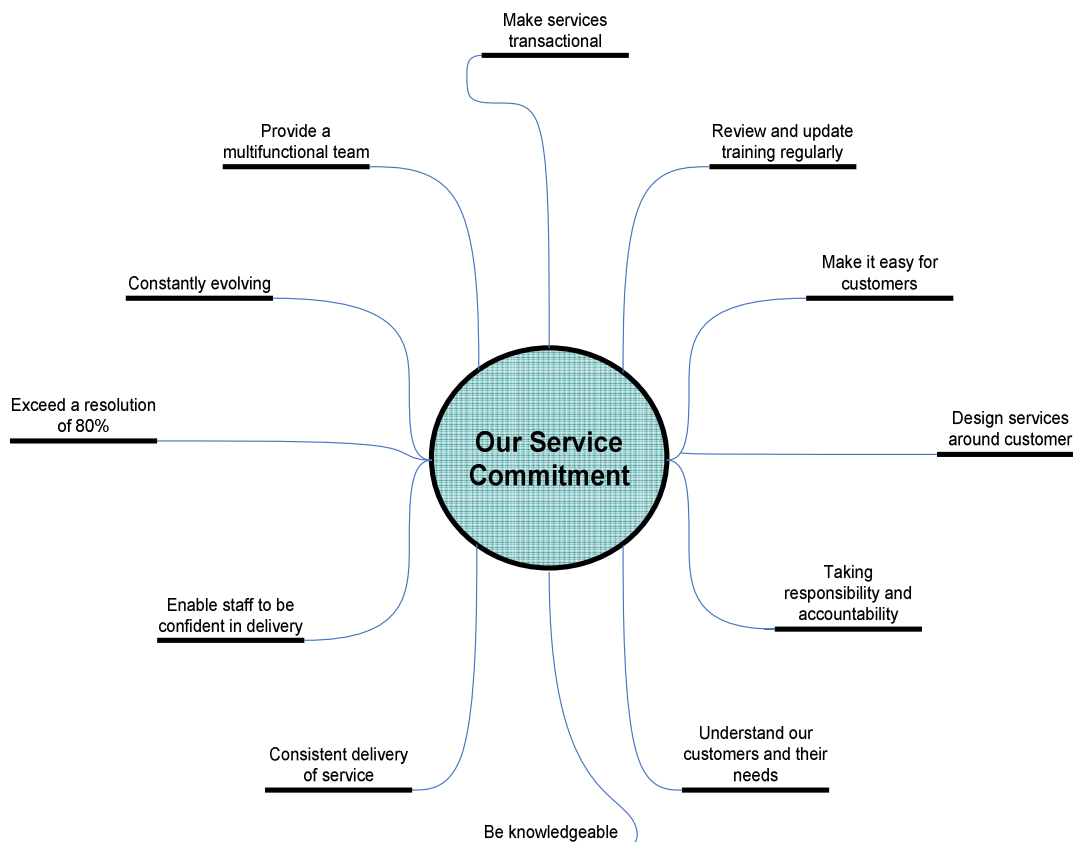
We promise to: This is a very definite statement, perhaps it could be: we aim to

- Answer phone calls, professionally and courteously taking ownership.
- See 85% of customers within 10 minutes.
- Reply to letters within 10 working days.
- Acknowledge E-mails the same day, and respond within **two/three** working days.
- Always make an appointment when requested.
- Deal with 90% of enquiries without further reference.
- Give a polite, friendly and effective response.
- Present ourselves as Service Professionals being neat, clean and always wearing name badges so our customers can recognise us.
- Monitor compliments, complaints and comments to ensure we learn from what our customers tell us, and consult with local people to ensure we meet their needs more accurately in our programme of continuous improvement.

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

However to enable us to progress further in achieving our vision of a customer focused strategy with the customer at the heart of all activity we will make a range of process, technology and people improvements. We aim to go the 'extra mile' for our customers by:

- Designing and delivering services around customers' choices and needs.
- Measuring and publishing performance standards for customer service including complaints handling.
- Ensuring social inclusion by adopting a 'design for all' approach that ensures that all customer needs are met irrespective of age, gender, disability, ethnic origin, race, religion or geographical location and in accordance with our commitment to the Equality Framework for Local Government .
- Continuing to provide road shows in order to reach people who would not usually visit our offices.
- Understanding our customers' changing needs based on sound, focused customer research.
- Continuing to expand the range of partner services delivered.
- As one of the eight local authorities working in partnership with other public, voluntary and private sector organisations to deliver services to the people of Norfolk. We are an active member of the Customer Access Network (CAN) currently working on a Mystery Shopping initiative
- Developing a single view of customer contacts across all of the customer access channels through the continual development of our Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) Lagan Frontline.



Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Multiple Access Channels

Following on from our ongoing Customer Research through surveys, forums and focus groups with results showed that 70% wish to contact us by telephone, 25% Face to Face and the remaining 5% wish to utilise our website; we have implemented a number of changes to ensure that residents and visitors have improved access to Council and other public services.

In order to achieve this we will ensure that:

- Interactive web services remain available on a 24 x 7 basis. This will allow customers to look-up information and review advice, to make payments online and lodge service requests to be dealt with within normal working hours. We wish to increase the transactional functionality of the site.
- The Customer Contact centre operates Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00 (closing Friday at 17:00)
- Customer Service Centres operational hours vary dependant on town

Are the times below fixed as it may be better to refer people to the website or the council phone number at they may be subject to change

ATTLEBOROUGH - Community and Enterprise Centre, Church Street,
Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 9am – 4.30pm

Friday 9am – 4pm closed for Lunch 1pm ½ an hour every day

DEREHAM - Michael Chaplin House, Station Road,
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 9am – 4.15pm

THETFORD - Breckland House, St Nicholas Street,
Monday to Thursday 9am – 5 pm

Friday 9am – 4.30pm

SWAFFHAM - Town Hall, London Street,
Monday 9am – 4pm - closed for Lunch 1pm ½ an hour
Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.30am – 1pm

WATTON - Wayland House, High Street,
Wednesday 9am – 4.30pm

Friday 9am – 4pm closed for Lunch 1pm ½ an hour both days

- We will only use the voicemail facility as a last resort and remember that customers or callers prefer to speak to people.

We recognise that our customers want to use different access channels for different purposes at different times. It is important therefore that we provide multiple service channels but that the same high level of service is delivered through all of them.

We provide a range of access opportunities to allow the customer to interact with us, whether it is to seek information, guidance or service delivery. Where appropriate this extends to partner organisations.

We provide web-enabled services and information by which all customers, particularly those in rural areas, can access services represented through remote electronic devices, either from their home or Libraries.

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Enabling Technology

The Government's agenda for modernising the public sector, including local government, includes the rapid development of electronic service delivery.

We aim to maintain the 'Excellent' rating achieved in an E-Government Access audit commission report November 2006, continuing to offer a seamless service to Breckland residents.

Our ICT strategy seeks to deliver an infrastructure/platform to deliver the Councils key priorities, investigating viability of new and innovative ways of delivering services for the council, whilst respecting the need to deliver both 'value for money' for Breckland residents, and also recognising our commitment to environmental change.

However the heart of this Customer Access Strategy is for enquiries to be resolved at first point of contact, avoiding double handling of queries and delivering fast, effective and efficient query resolution. This is in part achieved through the effective use of technology commonly known as Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) allowing specific customer cases to be created, managed and tracked to completion, as well as a means of measurement of key performance indicators and measures.

Our CRM is a necessarily complex system, having the ability to integrate with key back office systems, effectively moving specialist knowledge from back office to front office – which is where our customers need it.

The further development of CRM will help to support Breckland's pro-active customer centric approach, and we intend to extend and improve our online capability by developing our website, www.breckland.gov.uk. Its aim being to resolve the majority of residents queries 24/7 – allowing our skilled contact centre team to focus on more value added service delivery. However development of the web interface to look-up information and advice make further payments on-line, complete further electronic application forms, lodge service requests and text to tell in additional service areas.

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Equality

The promotion of widespread access to the information and services we offer through the use of appropriate technologies will extend the service, particularly to those customers in most need of assistance.

We aim to establish equality of access to all members and groups of the community. We currently provide the following in order to achieve this:

- Interpretation services
- Translation and transposition to Braille
- Large print
- Tape or any other media necessary to enable customers to communicate
- Electronic doors/ramps where appropriate
- Hearing loops
- Minicom
- Staff training
- Diversity monitoring/Customer Segmentation
- Obtaining data from the Pension Service and contacting customers to advise them that they may have an entitlement to one of our services of which they were unaware.

However research highlights that the take up of our services in certain socio economic groups is lower than we would hope. We will ensure that we reach as many customers as possible in accordance with our Breckland Social Inclusion Strategy (is this still a live strategy?) by:

- Producing literature in different languages.
- Producing forms in different languages.
- Building up relationships and trusts with groups who would not normally visit/contact the offices.
- Attending social events planned by organisations such as Age Concern in an attempt to increase the take up of particular services such as benefits
- Advertising our services on bus routes to reach those who reside in rural areas.
- Holding Action Days with partner services to invite residents to become involved with the development of their area
- Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) secured money from the Migration Impact Funding which will enable us to kick start a project of a One Stop Shop which will enable us to deliver a wider range of services by working with a variety of organisations, we also wish to enable mobile working which will take these services to our rural communities

Communications

Just like any commercial business, our success depends on the satisfaction of our customers, and whether they believe services are easy to access and live up to their expectations. Therefore we regularly measure the views, perceptions, opinions and satisfaction of those who use our services.

We believe that we use effective two-way communication to support our customer access strategy by:

- Explaining about our services that are available and how to access them.
- Taking further steps to ensure that we identify and reach people who are unaware of the services available to them and any entitlements that they may have.
- Ensuring that our written communication is jargon free.
- Deliver on promises, keeping the customer informed at all times even when there is no news.
- Using electronic media (E-government) to transform services, making them more accessible, more convenient and more responsive.
- Generating changes in behaviour, such as encouraging people to access services online.
- Promoting equality of access, ensuring that information is available to everyone at the right time and in the format they prefer, supporting strategies for valuing diversity and social inclusion.
- Developing and implementing an information strategy when?, which ensures the provision of appropriately, branded, high quality written information (e.g. leaflets, brochures) and plasma displays from across all service units within customer service centres and information points with partner organisations.
- Highlighting performance improvements, celebrating success and achievements, linked to the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework.
- Developing a culture where the importance of effective communications in delivering excellence in customer service is acknowledged, and reflected in contact with staff that is welcoming, informative, responsive, courteous and positive.
- Undertaking meaningful consultation with local people and involving them, and feeding back on how their views have informed service developments and change.
- Ensuring local people have ongoing opportunities to compliment, complain and provide suggestions for improvement

Seamless Service

Business Improvement using systems thinking has been used to streamline the customer interface of the services delivered by our Customer Contact and Customer Service Centres and to integrate these customer processes with a number of the supporting back office processes. This provides a consistent approach for handling standard processes across the customer services concerned and provides a 'One Team' approach. As a result 90% of request for Council Tax service are resolved at the first point of contact.

We aim to build on this to develop a customer service that works with service areas and partner organisations to provide efficient and effective services to the public. This will be achieved by:

- Further integration of back and front office process and systems, where appropriate.
- Further use of Partners' IT systems.
- Adopting approved standards for identifying and referencing customers, businesses and property to enable joined working with other service providers.
- Strengthening our existing links with partner organisations to provide smooth, joined-up and seamless access to services in excess of purely Council related services, across all access channels providing effective holistic service delivery to meet customer needs.
- Expanding the range of partner services delivered through the Customer Service Centres.
- Delivering shared services with neighbouring authorities as part of the Customer Access Network (CAN) within Norfolk.
- Increasing the range and inter-activeness of web-enable services.

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Value for Money

Breckland Council has a regional reputation for being at the very forefront of improvement in public services.

All services, processes and infrastructure will undergo continuous review to achieve maximum value for money and we will:

- Strive to achieve first-time answers to customer enquiries.
- Minimise waiting and response times.
- Review the current procedures for call handling and implement any required changes to improve performance.
- Promote customer self-service.
- Feedback into the Council's Asset Management Plan (not sure we have one of these currently) and Capital Strategy on service priorities, service delivery, points of contact, accessibility and cost effectiveness, which result in changes to capital resources.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with other organisations to share funding.
- Strive to achieve a corporate Customer Service Excellence (CSE) the Government Standard accreditation formerly known as the Chartermark
- Endeavour to surpass our recent Mystery Shopper

Our customer charter and measures that we work towards

- Calls will be answered by professional, customer focussed officers who will take ownership of your enquiry or request for service.
- More than 5% of officers' time to be spent on customer focussed training
- Consistently achieving > 85% in the Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Finance Performance Expenditure within 3%
- Staff Satisfaction to be greater than 70%
- Less than an average of 7 days lost due to sickness per employee.
- Face to face contact 85% of Customers to be seen within 10 minutes. How is this measured?

Quality Management

Our Business Plan provides the foundation on how we work delivering efficiency and effectiveness as an organisation and as an employer.

We will further facilitate the Plan by:

- Employee Performance Development Reviews.
- Performance Management - measurable performance standards for customer service including complaints handling.
- Monitoring customer satisfaction.
- Undertake End-to-End Process Review to ensure services delivered by Customer Contact & Service Centres work efficiently and effectively with Service Areas
- Extensive training including NVQ's in Customer Service.
- Recruitment initiatives such as open days.
- Benchmarking against other councils and private organisations and actively participate in the Public Sector Benchmark Group.
- Attaining recognised quality concepts such as CSE the Government Standard Charter Mark and Investors in People (IIP) award
- Investment in ICT and suitable support mechanisms.
- Introducing any remaining services, which are not currently handled by the Customer Contact Centre by the end 2010 Is this corporately agreed?
- Reviewing and implementing any changes to procedures for call handling to further improvement.
- Visiting Local Authorities who have received recognition for "Best Practise".

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Governance

We have a lead Member and Director responsible for ensuring access to services is developed and improved. The Customer Contact Team Manager will carry out day to day performance and quality management and the following steps will also be taken to monitor the Customer Service provided by Breckland Council:

- Performance against our Customer Service Standards will be publicised regularly (where?).
- The Head of Customer Services will ensure appropriate financial management of customer services.
- A quarterly Performance Clinic is held with the Executive members and Service Director plus the Performance Management Team. The specific management information data captured via the HiPath Pro-centre reports and the Lagan Frontline reports, plus updates on projects are recorded using the TEN Performance Management software
- Quality will be monitored through call coaching on a monthly basis and mystery shopping on a quarterly basis in collaboration with the Customer Access Network within Norfolk. (CAN County & District Councils + other Public sector and voluntary organisations)
- We will present The Service Team Plan to the Full Council annually (do we? The Annual Delivery Plan goes to Cabinet)

National Indicators & Projects

NI14 SP-CS 02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Record avoidable contacts ○ Take note of customer feedback ○ Identify trends and issues ○ Feedback to service areas to enable resolution ○ Amend process or correspondence
Projects OP-CS 01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand Customer Service Centres operational hours and service delivery within the 5 Market Towns
SP-CS 01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roll out of Council Tax Front Office Optimisation to all Customer service officers
CSE Accreditation SP-CS 03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate building blocks approach ○ Time line from November 2009 to March 2011

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

Action Plan 2009 – 2012

We have a clear vision for the delivery of services across multiple access channels. This is underpinned by existing initiatives including our Customer Contact Centre and current Customer Service Centres within our 5 Market Towns and the website.

E-enabled service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review content and usage of Website ○ Promotion of Web Access ○ Enable self-service e-forms ○ Further integration of back office systems ○ Promotion of Text/SMS usage ○ Digital TV ○ Tell Us Once – April 2010
Service Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to review service delivery using Systems thinking which places the customer at the heart of all we do ○ Review existing scripting, processes and case creation bringing to the Front any transactional processes to allow a One & Done.
Improve Service Levels for call handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate approach and standard ○ Measure Quality and outcomes above quantity ○ Increase resolution rate at first point of contact rather than hand-offs
Continued infrastructure and Network upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build an infrastructure across the district to better enable speed and ease of access for both Officers and Customers ○ Upgrade or review our current digital telephony platform ○ Upgrade or review our current Contact centre telephone system HiPath Pro centre – to enable flexibility of call distribution regardless of location. ○ Upgrade our CRM system Lagan Frontline 6.1 to enable greater functionality ○ Install BPM to enable joined up working ○ Single repository of information – enabling everyone to equal access to consistent, accurate and up to date

Breckland Council Customer Access Strategy

CSE the Government Standard	Attain a corporate Customer Service Excellence the Government Standard accreditation (replacing Charter Mark) in a building block approach by March 2011
Customer Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Each service area will undertake a segmentation questionnaire, impression rating and create specific Action Plans.
Mobile Working / Home Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provide an increased number of staff with facilities for home working and/or mobile working.
Joint Town Centre Customer Service Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Maximise opportunities of sharing resources with organisations within Breckland, offering ease of access to a cross section of public sector and voluntary services.

Migration Impact Fund Project

- To strengthen the integration of new and migrant communities and improve the ability of such groups to access to services from public, private and voluntary sector bodies
- Provide integrated solutions to the problems faced by both migrant citizens and all other communities, by providing all the services required to meet their needs, at a single point of contact.
- Training of specialised staff to sort the various migrant and community requirements in order to better route users (by evaluating their queries and issues and verifying their documentation), thus contributing to speeding up the required procedures and access to services.
- A holistic, comprehensive model - Citizen's Shop and Bus contributes to improving efficiency in coordinating different actions and services and simplifies both access and resolution.
- Contributes to minimising the distrust from communities accessing the services.
- Serve to enhance a climate of cooperation and consultation between all of the stakeholders: Local Government, partner agencies, migrants, migrant-led community groups, employers, trade unions and the public.
- Ensuring that integration is a two-way process, where the receiving society actively engages in adaptation.
- A Citizen's Shop and Bus will ease pressure on mainstream services and provide for better pooling of resources and information between organisations with relevant expertise in the area and to make efficiency cost-savings.
- Engaging companies in debates on integration and linking governmental programmes with companies' corporate social responsibility programmes