

Demand Management Strategy

Context

In recent years, the Council has faced the largest reductions in funding from Central Government in living memory and we expect even more to come. Over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 we faced government grant reductions (including the New Homes Bonus) of £1.9 million with a further grant reduction of £3.5 million expected over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Against the back drop of a reduction in funding the Council's workforce has reduced from 593 employees in 2011 to around 500 in 2017. We expect to see a further reduction in employees in the future.

Despite the reduction resources and staffing, demand on the Council continues to increase. This is not only as a result of an increase in requests for service but also due to rising customer expectations.

According to projections it is estimated that the population of the Borough will increase from just under 116,000 to 125,000 in 2026 and will be 133,000 by 2039. We also expect the number of households to increase from 52,000 to 60,000 by 2039. A growth in population and households will directly impact on the demand placed on the Council.

So the Council is faced with the need to do more with less. Demand management presents an opportunity to meet this challenge.

What are our drivers for change?

- Saving money and creating efficiency
- Improving customer service and meeting customer need
- Advances in technology mean that there are new ways to connect with colleagues and customers quicker and in different ways

What is demand management?

Demand Management is about ensuring the right service reaches the right customer when and where they need it, for the best cost. By doing this we improve the customer experience, while reducing duplication and abortive work, saving on unnecessary costs.

What do we mean by 'demand'?



Value demand. Demand arises when customers turn to the council to fulfil a need. This could be something simple such as reporting fly-tipping to the council, or paying a council tax bill. Not all demand is bad. As a council we are here to 'serve people and improve lives' and demand on us to do this is good demand – it is demand that has value. Value demand can also arise when customers ask the Council to provide new or existing services from which an income can be generated. Value demand is demand the Council wishes to encourage.

However, there are different types of demand that the council inadvertently creates which can be managed more effectively.



Demand which is avoidable. This is a need that can be better met by other means or channels. For example, enabling customers to easily report fly-tipping via their smartphone rather than having to call or email the council, or by providing clear information on the website so they don't need to contact us.



Demand which is preventable. This is when things could have been done earlier which would have prevented the need arising in the first place. For instance, not dealing with an issue at the first point of contact meaning the customer has to make further contact or complains. It is also when we make decisions then change our minds or don't say no when we need to, which creates duplication or abortive work.



Demand which arises from failure. This is when demand is caused by the very system designed to respond to demand in the first place. For example a Service sending out poorly worded letters resulting in a high volume of customers calling the contact centre to clarify or complain. Similarly, a Service sending out letters to customers without liaising with the contact centre first prevents the contact centre from planning ahead for a potential influx of phone calls which would enable them to better manage this demand.



Demand which is excessive. This is where the council is providing more than is needed or inadvertently creates demand through dependency.

What is our vision?

We want to reduce excessive, avoidable, preventable and failure demand and focus the resources we have on value demand. We also want to slow down the rise in demand to levels that are manageable within the resources we will have available to us.

How will we do this?

Managing demand begins by recognising the root causes that create and drive demand. The behaviours, expectations and default actions of both customers and the Council can magnify and multiply demand. Any attempt to manage demand and improve outcomes, must be based on an understanding of how people – both those using and delivering services – behave, and what they want, need and aspire to.

In order to identify excessive, avoidable, preventable and failure demand and areas for improvement, we will conduct a programme of Demand Management reviews which focus on improving processes from a customer perspective and reducing duplication and fragmentation.

Through our Customer Focus Group we will:

- gather and actively use customer feedback (including complaints) in a consistent, systematic and effective way
- utilise insight so that we are able to better understand our customers and change the way they interact with us
- review the wording of standard correspondence sent to customers
 - to ensure that we do not create failure demand
 - to 'nudge' customers into thinking and behaving differently in order to reduce bad demand

Through the Digital Programme Board we will continue to implement the Digital Strategy, to ensure that:

- Our website is redesigned using data, Government guidelines and best practice to add more features, so that it is:
 - Easy to use
 - Accessible
 - Simple
 - Fully responsive (Mobile Friendly)
 - Fully transactional
- All social media channels are capable of dealing with customer services enquiries quickly and effectively
- We expand the range of interactions that can be conducted online
- We exploit all opportunities from existing investments

It is important that we not only look at demand from our external customers but also look at demand we place on each other. We will therefore also reduce demand within the Council by:

- Ensuring staff have the right training
- Publishing and sharing information on an improved intranet
- Introducing a corporate project management process so that projects are managed in a consistent, systematic and effective way

What benefits do we expect to see?

It is important that we manage our demand so that we can reduce excessive, avoidable, preventable and failure demand to a minimum to enable us to focus on value demand. Benefits of managing demand are:

- Delivering better customer service
- Targeting support and services to where they are most needed
- Developing and empowering customers to serve themselves
- Saving money through operational and financial efficiencies
- Enabling the council to cope with increased value demand without necessarily requiring an increase in resources
- Removing duplication and abortive work
- An opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge of the workforce.