

Customer Access Charter

Introduction

We are committed to providing the highest level of service possible and strive to continue to develop and improve services so that they are customer focused, accessible, and meet the needs of all our customers.

This Customer Access Charter supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy and contributes to the corporate priority of being 'an exemplary Council' by enabling high performing services and high customer satisfaction. The aim of the Charter is to set out our approach to customer services and outline what you can expect from us when you access our services.

How we apply this Charter

The Customer Access Charter will be applied whenever you have any form of contact with the Council. The Charter is relevant to all of our customers, both internal and external, and will be applied by all council staff, regardless of the level of contact that they have with customers during their normal duties.

Our objectives

To ensure that we are providing you with the highest level of customer care, the Charter has the following objectives:

- To establish consistent customer care standards across the Council
- To set out our commitment to you as our customer
- To establish the measures that will be put in place to monitor and manage the policy's implementation.

What you can expect from us?

The council is committed to providing the best possible customer experience. This means that you can expect that:

- We will ensure that our services can be accessed **quickly and conveniently online** through the council's website to provide easy access to all the information and services that you need.
- We will support you to be able to access services through the **channel of your choice** and will enable all customers to be able to access digital services online, either from their homes or through the self-serve facilities available at the council.
- If you need to speak to us directly about an enquiry or service request, we will aim to resolve this at the **first point of contact** wherever possible.
- You will have direct access to **service specialists** who are able to handle resolutions quickly and effectively.

- If your contact cannot be resolved straight away, we will keep you **informed and updated** about the progress of your contact and when you can expect a response.
- We will support all customers to access services and will support information to be available in other formats such as a different language, Braille or large print if you request this.
- We will aim to ensure that you only need to **contact us once** for your request by making sure that we collect all necessary information at the first point of contact.

Our Customer Care Standards

Our Council website is accessible at any time and is the quickest and most convenient way to access council services including to:

- Access information about council services
- Submit service requests, report issues, apply for services and make payments

When you contact the Council, we will aim to support you to use online services wherever possible but we also offer a range of choices for accessing our services.

If you contact us via telephone we will aim to:

- Answer your call promptly- if you are passed onto a specialist officer to complete your enquiry, we aim to answer the phone within 90 seconds.
- Greet you, let you know who you are speaking to at the Council and ask how we can help you.
- If the person taking the initial call cannot answer your query, it may be necessary to connect you to a colleague. We will tell you who you are being transferred to and why. The colleague receiving the transfer will be updated so that they do not have to repeat information.
- If we cannot answer your query straight away, we will take your name and number and will ensure that we call you back in a timely fashion. We will keep you updated about when you can expect a response.

If you contact us via electronic contact such as email, text or via the website we will aim to:

- Acknowledge your enquiry within 1 working day and let you know when a full response can be expected. This may be an automated message.

- Provide a full response within 2 working days. If this timescale cannot be met, you should receive an explanation for the delay and an indication as to how long a full response is expected to take.
- Make it clear who is answering your enquiry, using standard email signatures with names, job titles and contact details so that you know who you are speaking to.
- Reply using clear and jargon-free language.

If you contact us in writing, we will aim to:

- Provide a full response within 7 working days. If this timescale cannot be met, you should receive an explanation for the delay and an indication as to how long a full response is expected to take.
- Include the name of the person who is dealing with your enquiry and how you can contact them within our response.
- Use our clear print guidelines to ensure that printed letters are easy to read such as for customers with visual impairments or dyslexia.

If you visit us in person, we will aim to:

- Not keep you waiting for more than 10 minutes before being seen.
- Deal with your query without passing you on to someone else. If this is not possible, we will explain to you who you are being passed on to and why.
- Offer appointments for all customers who need to visit the Council in person, booking an appointment prior to visiting will help to ensure that an officer is available to speak to you and that you will be seen timely.

We offer a visiting service for some services for those who cannot leave their own homes for an appointment at the Council offices. If we are visiting you in your home, we will:

- Let you know in advance who will be visiting you.
- Agree an appointment time and keep you informed if a delay occurs.
- Present ID cards displaying names upon arrival, providing an opportunity for you to check that we are from the Council.

How you can help us:

You can help us to deliver an excellent customer service by:

- Providing us with all the information that we need in order to help you.
- Using the Council website to find out information and access services where you can, as this is the quickest way to access our services.

- Consider setting up online accounts or direct debits so that our services can be delivered to you automatically.
- Treating our employees fairly and with honesty so that we can ensure that you get the services that you need.
- Helping us to improve by offering feedback on our services.

Contact details

- You can contact us via our website at www.southribble.gov.uk
- You can contact us via phone by calling 01772 625 625 from:
8.30 am- 5.15 pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
10.00am- 5.15 pm on Wednesday
8.30 am- 4.45 pm Friday

Our out of hours emergency service is available on 01772 625 499.

- If you have made an appointment to visit us, our Civic Offices address is:
Civic Centre
West Paddock
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 1DH

Other Policies

The Customer Access Charter operates alongside other policies which are outlined below:

Feedback policy

The Feedback Policy sets out the Council's approach to complaints, comments and feedback. Feedback is important for continuing to improve and develop our services and ensuring that we can be responsive to customer needs and concerns. If you contact us about a complaint we will:

- Approach complaints fairly and impartially
- Meet response deadlines wherever possible
- Explain the procedure that is set out in the Feedback Policy and when you can expect a response.

Whilst the Council encourages feedback and comments to help us to improve our services, we will aim to avoid contact that is not of value to you or the Council. By

ensuring that you are provided with all the information that you need and are updated on the progress of enquiries, we hope to reduce the level of avoidable contact so that we can offer a better quality of customer service.

Accessibility

Our accessibility statement sets out how we ensure our services can be accessible by all. On our website, you can change the colour, contrast level and font through the accessibility tool, Browse Aloud, and can listen to the website using a screen reader. Translations for common services are available on the website for British Sign Language users.

We will provide information in different formats on request such as large print, easy read, audio recording or braille. If you are contacting us by phone or visiting us in person we can provide a text service for people who are deaf, hearing impaired or have a speech impediment.

Our offices have audio induction loops, or we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

Monitoring and Review

The implementation and success of the Charter will be monitored through corporate and local performance indicators including:

- % of calls answered within 90 seconds
- Average wait time
- Overall customer satisfaction with the service they have received by the council

Feedback to the council including complaints are also monitored and reported on to allow us to continue to develop and improve.