



**Torridge**  
District Council

# CUSTOMER CHARTER

FEBRUARY 2024

We are committed to providing a consistently excellent standard of service by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do.

Our Charter sets out our commitment to you and clarifies what we expect from you



### **We aim, on all occasions to:**

- Answer your enquiry at first point of contact wherever possible.
- Ensure the information we provide is accurate and up to date.
- Be honest, approachable, and polite and handle all information provided to us, sensitively and confidentially.
- Offer a variety of ways to access our services, including a faster online experience.
- Treat all our customers fairly and equally, respecting and promoting Equality & Diversity
- Ensure we use plain language and have professionally trained staff available to answer your questions.
- Work with other departments and organisations to achieve a joined up and seamless approach to service provision, where the law allows.
- Use information we hold about you appropriately and safely.
- If possible, provide information in different formats at your request.

### **When you visit our offices, we will provide:**

- An accessible space which is open during our opening hours of, Monday – Friday 9am – 1pm and 2pm – 4.30pm.
- A reception area which is welcoming, clean, and friendly.
- Private rooms to maintain your confidentiality.
- Staff who wear a staff ID pass to identify themselves.
- If you have a meeting booked, we will aim to meet you within 5 minutes of the arranged meeting time, if this is not possible, we will inform you of a reason and an estimate of the meeting time.
- If you are here for a meeting, you can expect to be signed in and issued a visitors badge upon arrival.
- If you do not have an appointment, we cannot guarantee that the appropriate officer will be available to see you. However, if there is an appropriate officer available, they will aim to see you as soon as possible but there could be a wait. If you cannot be seen within a reasonable period, we will ask for your contact details and arrange for an appropriate officer to telephone you within the next two working days.

### **When we visit your home or business, we will:**

- Explain who we are and the purpose of our visit.
- Carry identification and show this straight away.
- Let you know as soon as possible if we are going to be late or are unable to keep an appointment.
- Provide you with a phone number if you want to confirm the identity of the visiting officer.
- Inform you what will happen next as a result of our visit.

### **When you phone the council**

- We will answer your call in a friendly and professional manner stating our name and dept. We aim to answer your call quickly although at busy times you may encounter a short wait.
- Occasionally, you may get through to an answerphone, these are checked regularly, and you should normally receive a response within 48 hours (excluding weekends and bank holidays)
- If there is a service available (i.e. voicemail), we will leave a message with appropriate contact details so that you can get back to us.

### **If you write or email us, we will:**

- Acknowledge you within three working day's and respond within five working days by email and within ten working days by letter and ensure you know who to contact if you require further information. However, please note that some individual departments may have their own procedures for response times for example Devon Home Choice, complaints, planning applications, FOI requests.
- If an officer is absent, e.g. annual leave, sickness, then an appropriate out of office notification will be sent to the customer advising that the staff member is unavailable including contact details for urgent enquiries.
- Respond within twenty working days to requests managed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (this is a statutory obligation for councils)
- Use plain English when responding to you.
- Use your feedback to improve our services.
- Where we are unable to respond in full to your email or letter within the timescales stated above, we will advise you of this and provide details of when a full response will be provided.
- If you are making a complaint, we follow the Council's complaints policy which can be found on our [website](#).



### **Equality and Diversity:**

We comply with the aims of the public sector equality duty and provide inclusive and accessible services. Wherever possible, we will make reasonable adjustments to address your individual needs.

### **What we expect from you:**

- To provide all the information we need to progress your enquiry.
- To tell us when your personal circumstances have changed.
- To be on time for any appointments, notifying us as soon as possible if you are unable to attend.
- Be patient – sometimes it can take time for us to give you the information or support you need, and we may need time to consult with colleagues.
- To utilise our services online as much as possible

### **Aggressive, abusive, or violent behaviour:**

We understand that at times you may be upset or anxious, but we are here to do our best to help you. Verbal abuse, harassment and violence are unacceptable.

- The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse, intimidation, or harassment towards our officers is likely to result in the termination of all direct contact with you and you may also be banned from Council premises. Such incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if Council officers believe that a criminal offence has taken place.
- Where correspondence (either letter or electronic) is abusive to officers or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence, we will inform you (the sender) that we consider your communication offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask you to stop using such language. We will ask that you edit your correspondence to remove any offensive text and resend it, otherwise it will not be responded to.
- The Council may place a restriction on the way we communicate with you, for example, restricting face-to-face contact within the Council buildings, requiring more than one officer to be present at any meeting, including meetings at statutory or partner agency offices and limiting contact to written formats only.
- Officers will end telephone calls if they consider you to be aggressive, abusive, or offensive. Our workers have the right to make this decision, to tell you (the caller) that your behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call if the behaviour then persists.



## Social Media:

The communications team at Torridge District Council are responsible for several different social media accounts on a variety of platforms. We recognise that social media plays an important role in how we communicate with you and share information.

We will do our best to respond to your enquiries on social media within two working days. Please e mail [customer.services@torridge.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@torridge.gov.uk) if your query is more urgent.

We are happy to help you in any way we can. We do, however, expect you to offer the same level of courtesy that we offer you, so we have a short set of house rules:

- You are wholly responsible for any content that you post including content that you choose to share
- We will remove, in whole or in part, posts which we feel are inappropriate
- We will block and/or report you if we believe your posts are
  - Abusive or obscene
  - Graphic, sensitive or offensive
  - Deceptive or misleading
  - In violation of any intellectual property rights
  - In violation of a law or regulation
  - Spam (persistent negative and / or abusive tweeting in which the aim is to provoke a response

## Feedback:

If we fail to meet your expectations or you would like to provide us with feedback, please go to our [contact us page](#) for details on how to do this. We value feedback as an opportunity to improve the way in which we deliver our services. All feedback will be responded to in full within ten working days. We will act quickly if we have got it wrong and take appropriate action to resolve issues.

