

Customer Services Background Information

Overview

Over the past 4 years residents have been increasingly accessing services either through the council's website or by telephone. The growing trend is for customers to engage with us digitally, however, work continues to tailor support to our residents needs and where people are unable to access us digitally, they can still do so face to face. The shift to self-service for many has enabled officers to provide support to those who are unable to access us digitally. Our service delivery is varied and agile and enables customers to access us in their preferred way which means we can tailor the support given to our vulnerable residents.

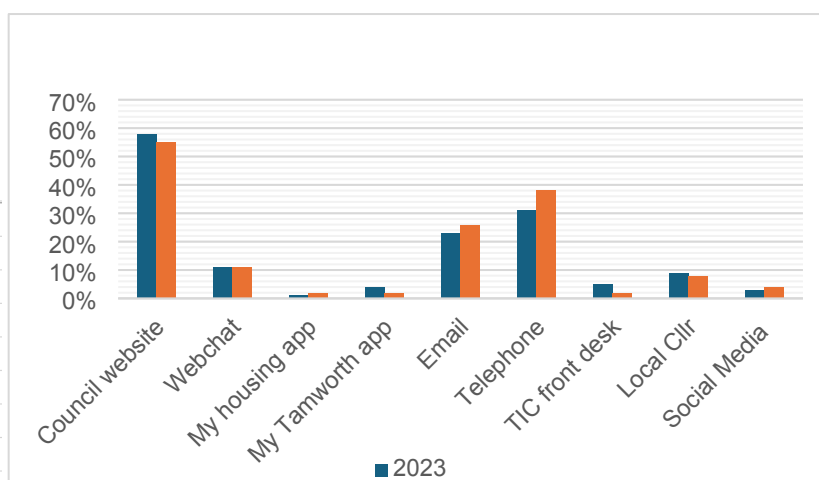
Resident survey

The findings of the resident survey provides useful insight into the value placed on customer services and how residents prefer to contact the council. In 2023 only 14% of respondents indicated that they would choose a non-digital option to contact the council, a slight increase from 10% in 2022. Overall, the data demonstrates that the council website and telephone continue to be the most popular access channels, as detailed in the table below.

**Residents were asked to choose top three contact methods

Residents preferred contact method 2022v2023

	2023	2022
Council website	58%	55%
Webchat	11%	11%
My housing app	1%	2%
My Tamworth app	4%	2%
Email	23%	26%
Telephone	31%	38%
TIC front desk	5%	2%
Local Cllr	9%	8%
Social Media	3%	4%



Customer service surveys

To provide further insight in January/ February 2024 the customer service team have carried out surveys with customers contacting the council to access services. To provide a balanced view, responses were sought through a variety of channels including telephone, digitally via TBC citizen panel and through speaking to customers on a face to face basis at TIC and the post room.

A total of 312 responses were received.

Area	Responses
Face to face	20
Telephone survey	125
Citizen Panel	167

The citizen panel had the highest survey return with 27% of all panel participants completing a survey. Whilst the demand for a new front door is highest from the citizen panel (22.8%) these are residents that very rarely (61%) or never (15%) contact the council with an enquiry and their predominant channel used when contact is made is email (45%), telephone (38%) with face to face the least preferred at 4.8%.

Unsurprisingly those that contacted us via telephone and completed the survey generally contact us by this method (97%), however 38.8% also contact us using digital methods and 0.8% via our face-to-face offer. The survey highlighted an interesting shift when asked about channel preference; 53% would prefer to access us digitally and 75% would choose telephone. This alongside the comments received provides a clear indication that harnessing digital improvements would provide the greatest impact to customers.

The highest reason for contact made by the citizen panel participants relates to waste and recycling suggesting that reporting issues and requesting information should be an area of focus working with Lichfield DC.

The highest contact type made by the telephone survey respondents was for queries relating to council tax. A focus on digital improvements in this area would therefore be beneficial.

Face to face survey respondents highlighted that of those participating 50% prefer the same channel whilst 40% would prefer to contact via the telephone. Feedback provided highlighted hesitancy using digital channels. The highest enquiry type of respondents (45%) was housing solutions. Similarly housing enquiries account for 27% of all enquiries made at the TIC – the highest enquiry type.

Further detail can be seen in the tables below

Customer service - front door - Citizen Panel						
How would you prefer to get in touch with Tamworth Borough Council?		Citizen Panel	Face 2 Face	Telephone		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Email	44.9%	75	5.0%	1	12.9%	16
2 Telephone	38.3%	64	40.0%	8	75.0%	93
3 My Tamworth portal or My Housing portal	7.2%	12	0.0%	0	11.3%	14
4 Online forms/website	25.1%	42	0.0%	0	16.9%	21
5 Webchat	11.4%	19	0.0%	0	12.1%	15
6 Go to the Tamworth Information Centre at the Assembly rooms	6.0%	10	50.0%	10	0.0%	0
7 Face to face at a new front desk	22.8%	38	0.0%	0	0.8%	1
8 Social Media	3.6%	6	0.0%	0	0.8%	1
9 I generally don't need to	4.2%	7	30.0%	6	8.1%	10
10 Other (please specify):	3.0%	5	0.0%	0	0.0%	0

Thinking generally, how do you normally get in touch with Tamworth Borough Council - Customer Services? Tick all that apply					
		Citizen Panel		Telephone	
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Email	45.5%	76	14.5%	18
2	Telephone	38.9%	65	92.7%	115
3	My Tamworth portal	5.4%	9	7.3%	9
4	Online forms/website	25.1%	42	10.5%	13
5	Webchat	6.6%	11	6.5%	8
6	Go to the Tamworth Information Centre at the Assembly rooms	4.8%	8	0.8%	1
7	Social Media	6.0%	10	0.8%	1
8	I generally don't need to	14.4%	24	3.2%	4
		<i>answered</i>	167		124

How often do you contact the council with enquiries?						
		Citizen Panel		Face 2 Face		Telephone
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total	Response Total
1	Often – more than once a week	0.0%	0	10.0%	2	11
2	It varies	21.6%	36	50.0%	10	34
3	Once a month	2.4%	4	5.0%	1	13
4	Very rarely – once a year	61.1%	102	30.0%	6	56
5	Never	15.0%	25	5.0%	1	10

What do you usually contact us about? Tick all that apply.							
		Citizen Panel		Face 2 Face		Telephone	
Answer Choice		Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total	Response Percent	Response Total
1	Benefits	4.2%	7	20.0%	4	11.5%	14
2	Business rates	1.8%	3	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
3	Complaints/compliments and comments	15.8%	26	0.0%	0	4.1%	5
4	Council housing issues	6.7%	11	45.0%	9	12.3%	15
5	Council housing repairs	11.5%	19	5.0%	1	10.7%	13
6	Council Tax	11.5%	19	15.0%	3	53.3%	65
7	Events/Art information	10.9%	18	0.0%	0	0.8%	1
8	Events/shows/castle - booking tickets	12.1%	20	0.0%	0	0.8%	1
9	Licencing	2.4%	4	5.0%	1	0.8%	1
10	Planning matters	9.7%	16	0.0%	0	0.8%	1
11	Reporting overflowing bins/trees/other issues with the environment	25.5%	42	0.0%	0	7.4%	9
12	Transport - car parking, permits and blue badges	7.9%	13	0.0%	0	2.5%	3
13	Waste and recycling	36.4%	60	0.0%	0	10.7%	13
14	Reporting any other issue	14.5%	24	0.0%	0	2.5%	3
15	I haven't contacted the council	13.9%	23	0.0%	0	1.6%	2
16	Other (please specify):	4.8%	8	30.0%	6	22.1%	27
		<i>answered</i>	165		20		122
		<i>skipped</i>	2		0		3

Our citizens panel clearly have a preference for self-serve contact demonstrated by the table below;

	*Citizen panel	*Telephone survey	Actual contact centre
Self serve contact	60%	29%	33%
Supported contact	30%	69%	67%
* those that stated they do not contact are not included			

Pop up engagement sessions

Over a period of 3 months, a programme of face-to-face pop-up sessions were piloted with borough wide promotion. Sessions were focussed on departments based on perceived customer demand; all sessions had representation from customer services for general enquiries.

The sessions were however very poorly attended despite officers actively encouraging engagement from outside the Town Hall on the day as well as a pre-advertised social media campaign. Feedback from Officers and residents highlighted.

- Where we fail to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact or provide timely follow-ups to residents, this naturally creates further demand – the expectation is that by presenting in person the enquiry will be resolved, which is not always the case.
- Of those surveyed at the pop-up sessions 43% do not normally contact the council, 43% currently contact via telephone and 14% make use of the face-to-face service at the TIC.
- Preferred methods to contact were 50% telephone and 50% face to face.

Given low survey completion rates it is not possible to draw any strong conclusions or recommendations from this data as it would be deemed not to be representative. A summary of the pop-up sessions is detailed in the table below.

Session type	Date	Number of Residents Attending
Repairs and Customer Services	22 August 2023	4
Community Safety /PSCO's	19 September 2023	44
Resident Survey engagement session	10 October 2023	25
Housing Solutions	24 October 2023	2
Environmental Health	7 November 2023	3
Economic Development and Regeneration Service	21 November 2023	5
Council Tax and Benefits	5 December 2023	3

Tamworth Mosaic profiles (understanding the characteristics of households within the borough)

A report commissioned through Experian using census and national data, allowed us to gain better understanding of our population and key characteristics, with a focus on digital confidence. Detailing household types in Tamworth, the report identifies which households are digitally savvy, which were most likely to shift to online services with guidance and those that would struggle. Data shows the greatest prevalence in Belgrave, Amington, Spital, Mercian and Bolehall wards across house types of vintage value, senior security and modest traditions not being digitally savvy. Equally Belgrave, Amington, Spital, Mercian and Bolehall for senior security and vintage value and Trinity and Wilnecote for prestige positions would be most receptive to being shown how to use technology.

Using this data to drill down to a ward level allows us to map where customer service face to face provision would offer the greatest opportunity for the most impact. Further detail can be found in appendix 5.

Wider face to face provision and outreach

Across the council, officers have regular face to face contact with residents in a variety of locations which demonstrates our continued commitment to supporting communities in a tailored manner, full details of this contact can be found at appendix 6. Service areas regularly work collaboratively with

each other to provide the most appropriate level of support. Recent examples include Tenancy Support Officers out in the community arranging food vouchers digitally via customer services.

Equally, the importance of the council working together with statutory and voluntary agencies is recognised, with partnership working becoming an increasingly central part of how we deliver services, especially to those most vulnerable. Appendix 7 outlines the breadth of organisations covering commissioned contracted services, Grant Funding support and In-kind (officer time) support.

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