



Experience Excellence in the face of adversity

UK Local Council Citizen Experience Excellence
Report 2022



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Foreword

Focusing on citizen need and expectations can help councils prioritise investment to deliver the greatest value for citizens

In recent history, local councils have been severely stretched. When the pandemic and resultant lockdowns hit communities, councils across the country continued to provide their existing vital services but also rose to the challenge by setting up community hubs, distributing food parcels, disbursing business support grants and providing a wealth of other support to those who needed it. This was all achieved amid seismic shifts in ways of working and citizen

expectations, and against the backdrop of ever-tightening budgets.

Now, as communities look to bounce back from the pandemic, councils must address a range of challenges. Some of these are existing issues: budgetary pressures from raising numbers and complexity of service demand, and creating a workforce for the future. Others have emerged since the pandemic: helping residents deal with the cost-of-living crisis, and optimising digital channels to meet citizens' heightened demand for seamless customer services and experiences.

“ Change isn't easy. Making government more citizen focused is an urgent matter. But it will take some time for citizen perceptions of the value they receive from their local council to change”

Jo Thomson

Partner,
Customer
Transformation





The cost-of-living crisis has increased demand for public services, and councils are having to do more with less. This challenge looks to become yet more prevalent as inflation rises and macro-economic factors take their toll. Combine this with the long-term effects of austerity measures and continued financial cuts to the public sector, and the result is local councils being stretched to their limits. These factors all combine to create tough choices about local council services, and a time of uncertainty and change for both colleagues and citizens.

We've seen a growing trend towards digital citizen contact and service delivery. Citizens increasingly prefer to interact with their local council through digital means, but challenges remain.

High cost non-digital channels still account for a large proportion of citizen contact across local council organisations. Councils must also contend with digital inclusion – the unique citizen base of a local council means that those who need the service most may find it hardest to access, and so non-digital channels must always be available to those who need them. Lastly, councils are challenged by the digital skills of their own workforce – their experiences and culture will also shape councils' digital transformation.

It's therefore vital that local councils can get a full picture of the citizen's interactions with the council, including their interactions with associated partners. Restrictions and

apprehensions on data sharing make it difficult to get this picture of citizen need, but our research shows us that citizens are increasingly expecting a joined-up experience like they may receive from the private sector.

This also affects outcomes - evidence suggests that there is an intrinsic link between the experience a citizen has when interacting with public services and public service outcomes. To improve outcomes for all, this link must be explored, fully understanding the drivers behind poor experiences and how citizen behaviours can be changed.

Our research shows that where digital services are designed around citizens' experience, this drives both satisfaction and outcome of the service. However, this works both ways - when digital services are not designed to meet the needs of the citizen they are seen as inferior and untrustworthy. Citizens will always seek care through the channel they most trust, and for digital services to be as appealing as face-to-face, compassion and trust must be built in from the outset.

Citizen-led, digitally enabled transformation means truly understanding what matters most to citizens, and co-designing services with citizen experience at the heart. There has never been a more significant moment for local councils in digital transformation – and so the time is now to get it right.

Section 1

Six Pillars of Citizen Experience

In the following section, we will address the following questions:

- What is the Customer Experience Excellence centre?
- How can we use the Six Pillars and other customer experience metrics to draw relevant insight for local councils?



This study is part of the global **Customer Experience Excellence** research programme, a systemic approach to identifying and communicating customer best practice for organisations to learn from.



13 years

of ongoing research and signals analysis



39

markets covered



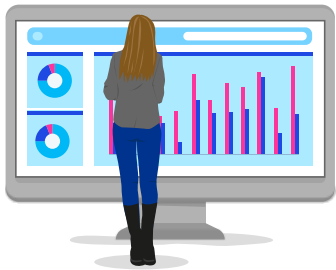
CEO and employee

interviews



5.5 million

customer evaluations



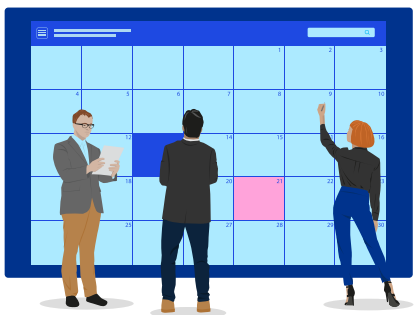
4,000

detailed brand reviews



550,000

consumers interviewed



This year's UK research took place between 15 June and 6 July 2022, which for local councils, generated

6400 UK Responses and
1070 feedback comments.



The Six Pillars of Experience for Local Councils

We have been measuring The KPMG Six Pillars of citizen experience for 13 years. Millions of evaluations across thousands of organisations have shown time and again that the Six Pillars provide an empirical benchmark for citizen experience excellence.

Empathy

Understanding a citizen's circumstances to drive deep rapport

Councils need to demonstrate that they care about their citizens by ensuring that critical emotional touchpoints are staffed with emotionally intelligent employees who go the extra mile to relate to and prioritise citizens, meeting citizens where they are emotionally, to empathise with their circumstances.

Personalisation

Treating citizens like individuals and adapting to their needs to drive an emotional connection

Councils need to recognise a citizen's context, including current and previous circumstances, no matter how they choose to access council services throughout their lives.

Time and Effort

Respecting citizen's time through minimising citizen effort and creating frictionless processes

Councils need to understand the value that citizens place on their own time and provide efficient, accessible services that they value. Councils should design services so that citizens can access them in a way that suits them, aggregating services as solutions not single point fixes.

Expectations

Managing, meeting and exceeding citizen expectations for service delivery

Councils need to understand the expectations of those they serve and go above and beyond to surpass these. Councils should focus on the end-to-end citizen journey to ensure services are integrated in delivering a seamless citizen experience.

Resolution

Taking accountability for and dealing with poor experiences competently to minimise inconvenience or distress

Councils need to ensure all agencies work together, taking accountability to solve citizen problems in their entirety, and improving from lessons learned. Councils should empower staff to not only solve citizen problems but also find the root causes and fix them with urgency.

Integrity

Being trustworthy and engendering trust through consistent organisational behaviour and transparency with citizens

For all citizens, the degree to which their local council delivers on its promises and acts in the best interest of citizens is consistently top of mind. Councils should identify actions and events which erode trust and ensure they are redesigned as a priority, with citizen best interests at heart.

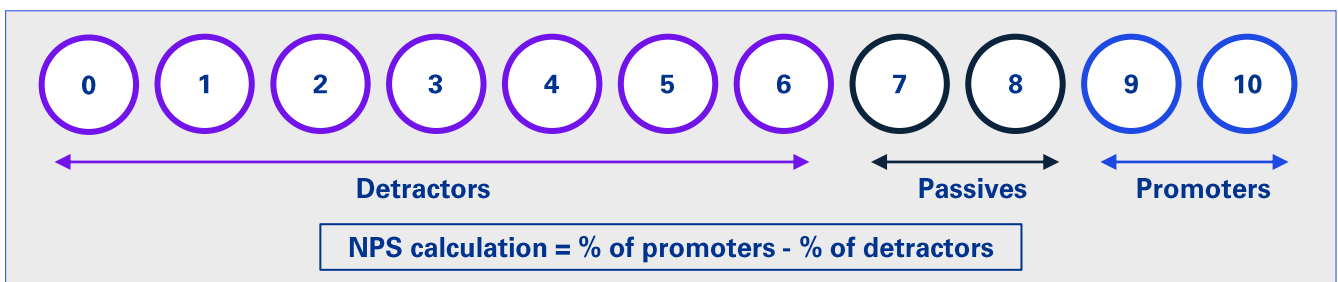
Using Metrics that Matter

Further to the Six Pillars, we have used Net Promoter Score as a measure for citizen satisfaction and to understand what matters most to citizens.

01 Net Promoter Score (NPS)

NPS is a world renowned metric for measuring customer satisfaction. It's typically used to measure advocacy, by asking respondents to rate a brand or service based on how likely they are to recommend them to others. We asked respondents whether they would recommend their local council based on the service that they have received. The responses are used to determine high or low levels of satisfaction.

NPS is scored on a scale from -100 to +100, calculated by taking the difference between the percentage of promoters and the percentage of detractors. Passives have no bearing on the NPS score. A score of -100 means that every citizen who interacted with their local council is a detractor and would actively not recommend the service they received. Conversely, a score of +100 means that every citizen is a promoter and would actively recommend their local council to others.

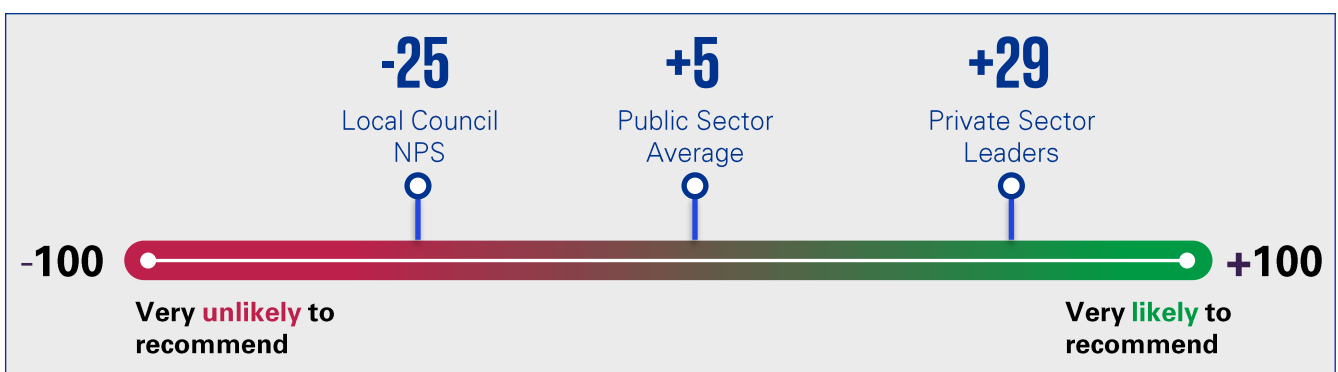


02 Why should we rely on NPS?

The public sector currently lags behind the private sector in its use of citizen experience metrics. This may be because of historically conflicting priorities, however as citizen expectations and behaviours continue to evolve at pace, citizen experience metrics are

crucial in understanding what matters most to citizens and how to deliver services that provide value.

We can use the Customer Experience Excellence research programme to provide benchmarks of what good looks like when it comes to NPS.



Section 2

A Reflection on 2021

**In the following section,
we will address the
following questions:**

- What do the themes we told you last year look like refreshed with 2022 data?
- Has the citizen felt improvement or is it more of the same?







Headline themes from 2021, continue to ring true throughout the 2022 research

Digital experiences have improved in 2022, however unresolved issues, lack of continuity and inadequate end to end accountability continue to be some of the biggest drivers of poor citizen experiences.

Expectations of digital are being met in pockets, however councils need to do more to exceed citizen expectations when it comes to digital

Citizens that responded to our 2022 survey reported increased satisfaction with the digital services provided by councils. In particular, council websites were often described as being helpful in supporting citizens to find the right information quickly, and often removing the need to make physical, more costly contact with the council.

However, for many citizens this is seen as delivering on a basic expectation and does not constitute their local council providing a great citizen experience or going above and beyond for their citizens.



16% increase in the proportion of citizens saying that the digital experience was simple and seamless

“I contacted my local council via their website to report fly tipping. The portal was easy to use and the rubbish had gone within 24 hours”

Issues are often left unresolved, abandoning citizens to find resolution by themselves

Frustration continues with slow response times or in some instances no response at all; this is a common theme across all interactions channels. This, combined with a lack of resolution at the first point of contact, is leaving citizens feeling abandoned by their local council and having to solve problems themselves.



36% of citizens said their issues and concerns were not dealt with quickly and effectively. NPS drops to **(-59)** from **+1** when this is the case

“It has taken several emails, which are usually not answered or if answered are answered after considerable delay, to have the errors corrected”



Continuity across service pathways is often poor, owing to a lack of understanding of the citizen across the end-to-end journey

Siloed systems continue to let citizens down when moving across service pathways. There is a lack of recognition of the citizen when moving between departments and as a result, citizens can often feel like they are interacting with a different organisation at each touchpoint. This feeling is exacerbated when citizen queries are complex.



45% of citizens said that their previous interactions were not acknowledged, and NPS drops to **(-50) from +1** when this statement is true

“It can be very stressful getting through to the right department on the phone and sometimes can take numerous attempts to be able to speak with someone”

Lack of end-to-end accountability and empowerment driven out of not acting in the best interest of the citizen

There is a feeling that local councils are unwilling to act on and take ownership for the issues that matter most to the citizen. Citizens reference how their feedback is not listened to and their personal situations are not taken into account.



26% of citizens felt that their local council did not listen to and understand their situation. NPS drops by **60 points to (-64)** when this is the case

“They do not listen to our problems, we have ongoing issues that they seem unwilling to resolve”

Section 3

2022 key insights

In the following section, we will address the following questions:

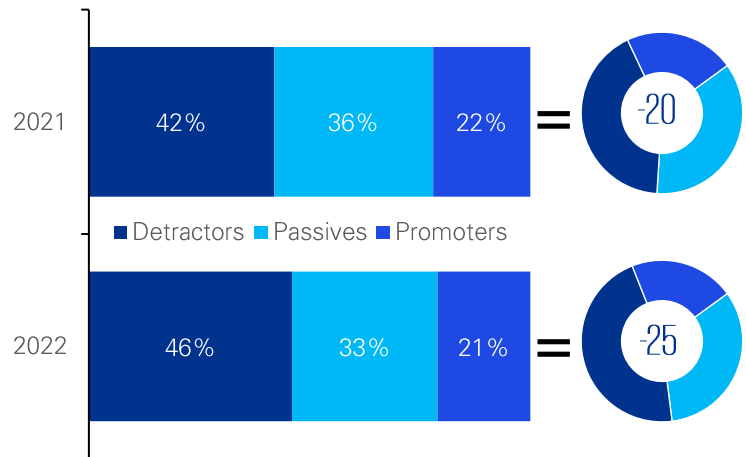
- What new themes have emerged from the 2022 citizen feedback?
- How can we use the Six Pillars to benchmark local councils?
- How has this insight been turned into action for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council?



Citizen sentiment towards their Local Council decreases for 2022

Nationally the NPS for local councils is -25, which is a 25% decrease on 2021.

This is predominantly driven by a 4 point increase in those who would actively not recommend their local council (detractors). Further to the key insights for 2022, this provides evidence that citizens expect more from their local council. The shift from passives to detractors illustrates how citizens tolerance for missed expectations is reducing.

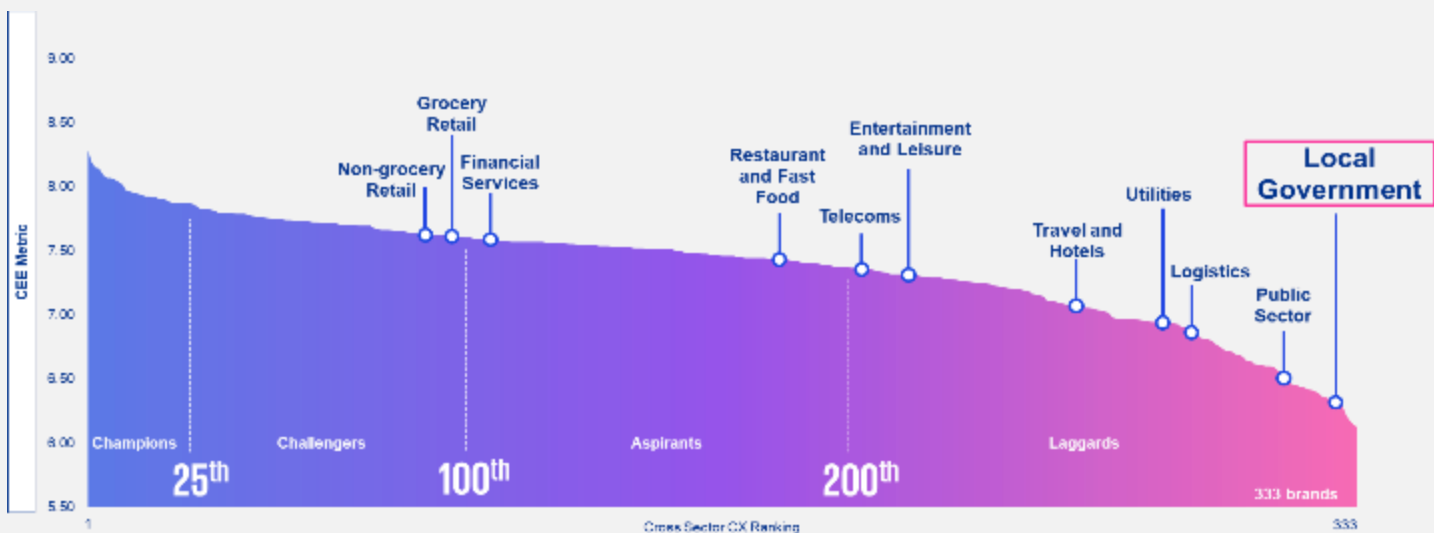


Local councils performs in the lowest 5% of all sectors and brands in terms of customer, or citizen experience

The S-curve ranks 333 brands and 10 sectors on their customer experience maturity. Customer experience in the public sector lags behind private sector industries, and this is particularly so for local councils which, at a national level, performs at the lower end of the scale.

To close the gap between local councils and other public sector organisations the priority must be to first focus on the basic aspects of their citizen experience offering, building trust and meeting simple citizen expectations, before focussing on becoming a citizen experience leader.

CEE Metric = Average score across the Six Pillars

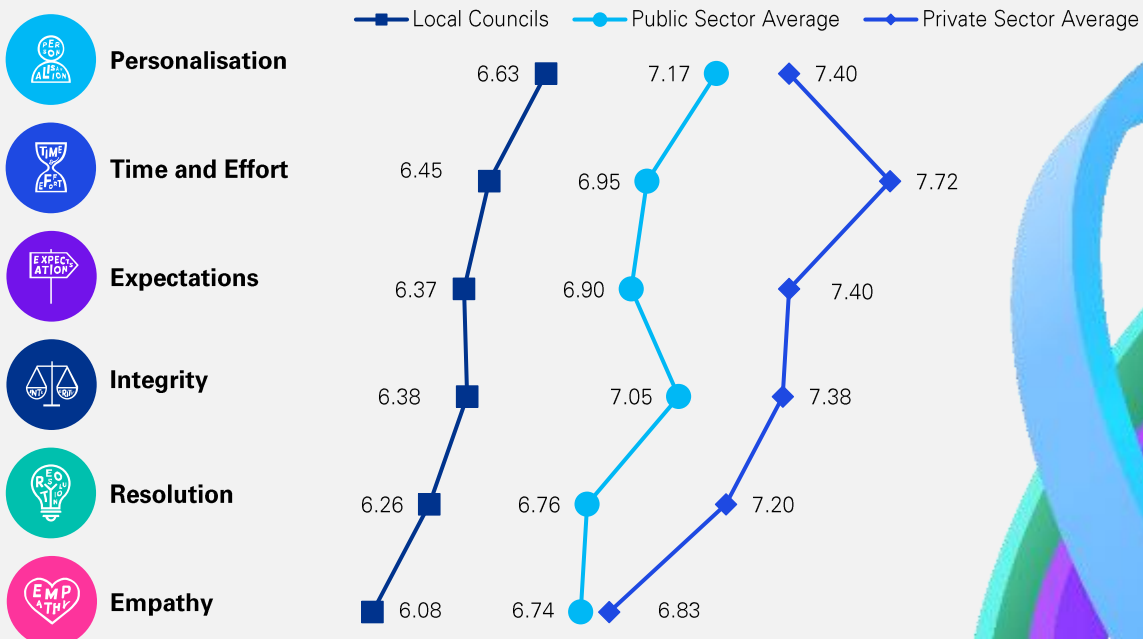


Performance against the Six Pillars of Citizen Experience

Local councils must focus on improving across all of the Six Pillars in order to close the gap between local councils and other public sector organisations. Earning the trust of citizens and demonstrating empathy towards their circumstances are two key areas of focus.

To achieve a leading citizen experience, organisations must excel across all of the Six Pillars, however for local councils, the biggest difference separating them from the public sector norm is the **integrity** pillar. Integrity is the cornerstone of providing a great citizen experience and getting this right is crucial in providing a platform for success for the other five Pillars. In the private sector, how a customer resonates with an organisations values and purpose is often one of the greatest factors in customer decision making and advocacy. Whilst citizens may not have the same choice of different service offerings in the public sector, their advocacy and voice defines the performance of public sector organisations, whose main purpose is to provide services in the best interest of the citizens they serve.

One of the key differences for local councils is how interactions are often driven from negative or highly emotional experiences. In these situations, the most positive citizen experiences have referenced friendly, helpful staff and most importantly, being listened to. Citizens want their local Council to empathise with their situation or issue, regardless of its gravity; for the citizen contacting, their issue is of the most importance and should be for the local council.



Key insights for 2022

Citizens expect their local council to do more

Citizens are unaware of the vast amount of services their local council offer. This could be due to the complex set-up of councils (e.g. County vs District), the fact that a lot of services are not used by a lot of citizens, or simply poor self-marketing from councils. Whatever the root cause, it is leading to the **perception that councils could do more for their citizens.**

There is repeated reference to the increasing **cost of council tax without citizens knowing what they are getting in return** from their local council. Citizens are often frustrated when core services in their eyes are poorly delivered, such as **waste collection which is the most referenced service and a theme in 20% of all feedback.**

When comparing feedback for local councils with the NHS, feedback for the NHS often references saving lives, or how the NHS does an incredible job with the resources it has available. **Local councils support vulnerable people with a similar impact, greatly improving their lives, however this is not recognised by the majority of citizens.**

Taking social care as an example, how many citizens recognise this is provided by their local council and not the NHS?

Local councils support vulnerable people and greatly improve lives, however this is not recognised by the majority of citizens



“I do not feel like I can trust them. They keep raising council tax but there is nothing to show for these rises”



The interests of the council are misaligned with those of the community they serve

From our research, **integrity and trust are the greatest influence on citizen advocacy towards a service.** Therefore, the public sector organisations that offer the greatest citizen experience are the organisations that are most trusted by the citizens they serve. This trust is driven out of listening to citizens and demonstrating action on the issues that matter most to them.

One of the common themes we have seen in this year's research is **citizens believing their council to be untrustworthy and to be motivated by their own financial interests**, and not those of the communities they serve. **Over 30% of citizens told us that they believe their local council does not act in the best interest of the community.**

We have seen consistent reference to the council delaying £150 cost of living payments causing financial stress for citizens, and councils taking unethical action, particularly in building on the green belt. **These issues are triggering highly emotive responses as they are issues which are highly important to citizens** and the council must recognise this and manage accordingly.

Over 30% of citizens believe their local council does not act in their best interests



They don't listen to the public and don't take the local's advise on certain improvements that could make something better"

Staff drive positive experiences but this is not enough

The most positive citizen experiences are credited to the staff that citizens interact with at the local council, who are often described as helpful and friendly. This is evidenced by the **82% of respondents who said that the staff were friendly and courteous**, however NPS only rises to -9 when this is the case, illustrating how **to drive increased satisfaction a friendly face is simply not enough**.

One of the important nuances for local councils is that when a citizen uses council services or makes contact with the council, they are often in need of resolution to an issue. As a result, **a good citizen experience is defined by achieving resolution, regardless of the people who the citizen interacted with**. At present, citizens feel that resolution is difficult to achieve, and if achieved, comes at a personal cost in the form of time and effort, and being passed from pillar to post.

It is no surprise that the public sector organisations who strike a balance between empathetic front-line staff and providing timely resolution are the leaders when it comes to citizen experience. These leaders **focus on empowering their people with the tools and capabilities to deliver services effectively** and reduce time spent on non-value, manual work, ultimately getting the most out of the existing resources they have available to them.

82% of respondents said that staff were friendly and courteous, however a good experience is defined by resolution, regardless of the people who the citizen interacted with



I contacted them about my council tax and I was messed around for ages but then I found one advisor who was so helpful”





Citizens opt for digital but satisfaction is greater with face to face channels

Our analysis this year has looked deeper into the channels citizens use when interacting with the local council. Over **60% of citizens interacted using a digital channel and two fifths of this group, interacted using the website only**, without need for physical contact with the council.

This evidence suggest that many citizens are comfortable interacting digitally or would prefer this as their chosen channel of interaction. However analysing the satisfaction with these channels, **NPS when interacting digitally is -24, compared to -17 when interactions are face to face**, indicating that the citizen experience is better when interacting face to face.

There is a clear opportunity to be exploited here through **improving the digital experience for citizens, providing services on the terms of the citizen, whilst at the same time reducing operational costs** as less resources are required to manage reduced physical contact with the council. Remaining resources can be prioritised to provide services to vulnerable citizens who need it most.

Public sector organisations who ensure their **digital front door is designed to meet citizen needs see the greatest satisfaction with digital channels** and as a result take advantage of the opportunity to provide greater value to citizens at less cost.

Over 60% of citizens interacted using a digital channel, however NPS for digital channels is -24



Much of the contact with the Council is online. It can be very difficult, and trying. When mistakes are made, it is always difficult to put it right"



A Spotlight on Integrity



Our private sector research tells us that integrity is the most important factor in customer advocacy. This is likely even greater for citizens where their quality of life is directly influenced by the decisions and actions of their local council.

A strong sense of societal and environmental purpose has become the defining characteristic of leading organisations. Public sector organisations are no different and are defined by the influence they have on the communities they serve.

What an organisation stands for and how its existence makes a difference to the communities it serves have become very important areas of communication for citizens. For local councils, increasingly citizens want to know how their council tax payments are being used to better their local community, and are frustrated when there is no obvious answer. Much of this may come back to citizens being unaware of the depth of services their local council provides, and in this case, the way in which a local council markets its societal purpose in a way that is individualised to the community it serves needs to change.

Transparency and data security are now integral parts of the citizen experience. The citizen data councils handle is often sensitive and a data leak would have a significant impact on citizen trust. Research in the private sector suggests as we move closer to the data economy, citizens will share personal data in exchange for a more personalised experience. Forward-thinking councils are looking to harness their data to make more informed decisions, and create a data-enabled culture where there is confidence in using and sharing data appropriately.

Where local councils need to improve citizen advocacy, with less financial resources, championing a purpose that provides social value and improves the quality of life for local communities is a quick win. This could be even more impactful in the current economic climate where for many, quality of life is decreasing due to the cost of living crisis. Providing support to citizens when they need it most will be repaid with a lifetime of trust and advocacy.





What did citizens think about the integrity of their Local Council?



Great. **They look out for and take care of the community.** If you have any queries, they will reach out and help you in the best way possible”



Our local council is brilliant for everything. They are ready **willing and keen to help all who ring them**”



They keep raising prices, and sending reminders for outstanding payments during the pandemic. There was no subsidising of fees, or **consideration of increased cost of living**”



They waste money constantly and **do not do what they say.** They **abandon vulnerable people and families**”

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council

Through being better connected and focussed on the citizen, it is projected that the council will achieve c.£44 million in cost savings whilst also providing an improved citizen experience.

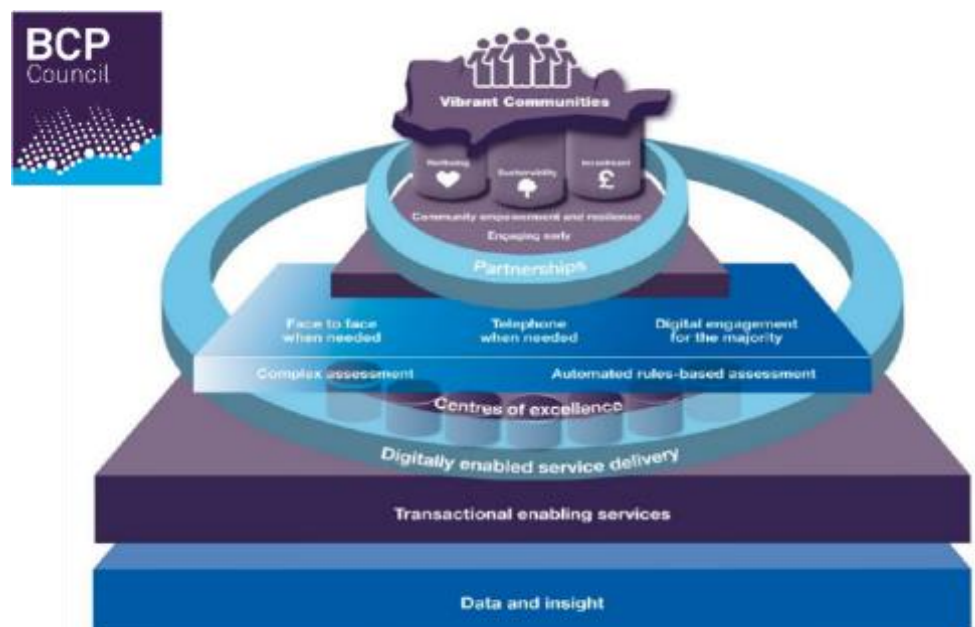
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council have developed a customer and digital strategy which sets out a vision for the future of customer across the whole council, "to provide a modern, efficient, and flexible experience where our customers self-serve, get answers first time and speak to us when they really need to". To deliver on this vision, KPMG and BCP council developed a future state customer function target operating model which, following transformation, will act as a centralised customer front door for customer contact across BCP council, ensuring that contact is handled by the right person, at the right time with the right tools in the right place.

Furthermore, KPMG and BCP council co-designed a repeatable service redesign methodology that enables the council to sustainably redesign all council services and deliver the council wide, customer-centric operating model. Lessons learned were captured to refine the approach and ensure that customers remained at the heart of service redesign.



We are not just designing singular solutions, everything we co-design with the citizen around the end-to-end citizen journey."

Matti Raudsepp, BCP Transformation Lead



Section 4

Key Takeaways

In the following section, we will address the following questions:

- How can local councils address the challenges they face to become truly citizen-centric and achieve more with less?





Key Takeaways

Councils must focus their efforts on understanding the individual needs of their citizens and providing their great workforce with a platform for success.

01 Demonstrating a positive social impact on local communities is crucial for creating citizen trust and advocacy

Most citizens do not understand the complexity and depth of services that their council provides, and therefore are unaware of how often they are using council services, or how the local council benefits the local community. There is a clear misconception behind the value exchange citizens are getting from their local council, from the citizens perspective they are a paying customer through council tax and are struggling to see value for money.

To change misconceptions or misunderstandings, councils should look to improve and increase their communications with the general public. By taking a taking an insight led approach to communications and engagement, deeply understanding the way in which different communities think and act, councils can create trust with their citizens and demonstrate, through stories over stats and figures that the council tax value is used to improve the lives of those who need it most. In a time of increasing financial pressures on both the council and the citizen, it could not be more important to ensure that the interests and actions of the council are aligned to citizen best interests.



02 Workforce empowerment is key for unlocking great citizen experiences

In our analysis, the local council's people were the best performing attribute, with over 80% of respondents saying that the staff they interacted with were friendly and courteous. Where they fall short, was in providing appropriate resolution for citizens. The primary purpose of most citizen interactions with the council is to either find information or a form of resolution to a query, and frustrations occur when this is not possible, particularly when the person in which they're interacting with has limited flexibility in how to resolve a query. For the new citizen, a friendly face is simply not enough.

The workforce must be given the platform to succeed through learning opportunities and training, in addition to being provided with the tools and capabilities to provide services on the terms of the citizen. Investing in the brilliant people councils already employ, fully utilising their skills and increasing productivity, whilst at the same time maintaining a friendly front door, is a great example of how councils can provide greater value for citizens at lower cost.



03 Digital solutions must be citizen-led in design and in delivery

This year's research has showcased how digital channels have the potential to make the citizen experience seamless, providing services through the channels that citizens want to interact with and preventing more costly contact with the council, particularly when an effective digital front door is in place, however this opportunity is only being exploited in pockets. The design of citizen facing digital solutions must take into account all citizens who might interact with the service, in line with Government digital standards and aim to provide resolution to the issues that matter most in a local community.

Digital services built with the citizen at the centre, combined with an understanding of the citizen groups who cannot engage digitally will reduce the need for citizens to physically contact the council, meaning council resources can be used to manage complex queries where they can provide maximum value. Digital solutions are perhaps the greatest lever an organisation can pull to deliver improved value at lower cost, however if they are not designed to meet the needs of their users, they are just another wasted investment.

Councils must redesign their operating models with the citizen at the centre, using digital as an enabler to provide great citizen experiences.



04 Citizen centricity must be adopted organisation wide

Lack of continuity and accountability remain two of the most pertinent issues for citizens. Citizens want to see their local council taking responsibility for the issues that matter most to them, knowing that no matter who they contact at the council, they will be listened to and find resolution. Creating this trust with citizens is driven out of organisational culture and ensuring that the local council has a clear purpose, centred around delivering on citizen needs.

In order to achieve this, local council's must take a joined up approach to citizen centricity, redesigning their operating models with the purpose of creating great citizen experiences, ultimately reducing siloed ways of working and promoting end-to-end empowerment and accountability. The benefits of a citizen-centric operating model are not only citizen facing, clear organisational structures and efficient internal processes reduce operational costs and allow local councils to achieve more with less.



Section 5

How KPMG can help

In the following section,
we will address the
following questions:

- How can KPMG help local councils become citizen-centric, taking strides on the council's journey to achieving more with less?

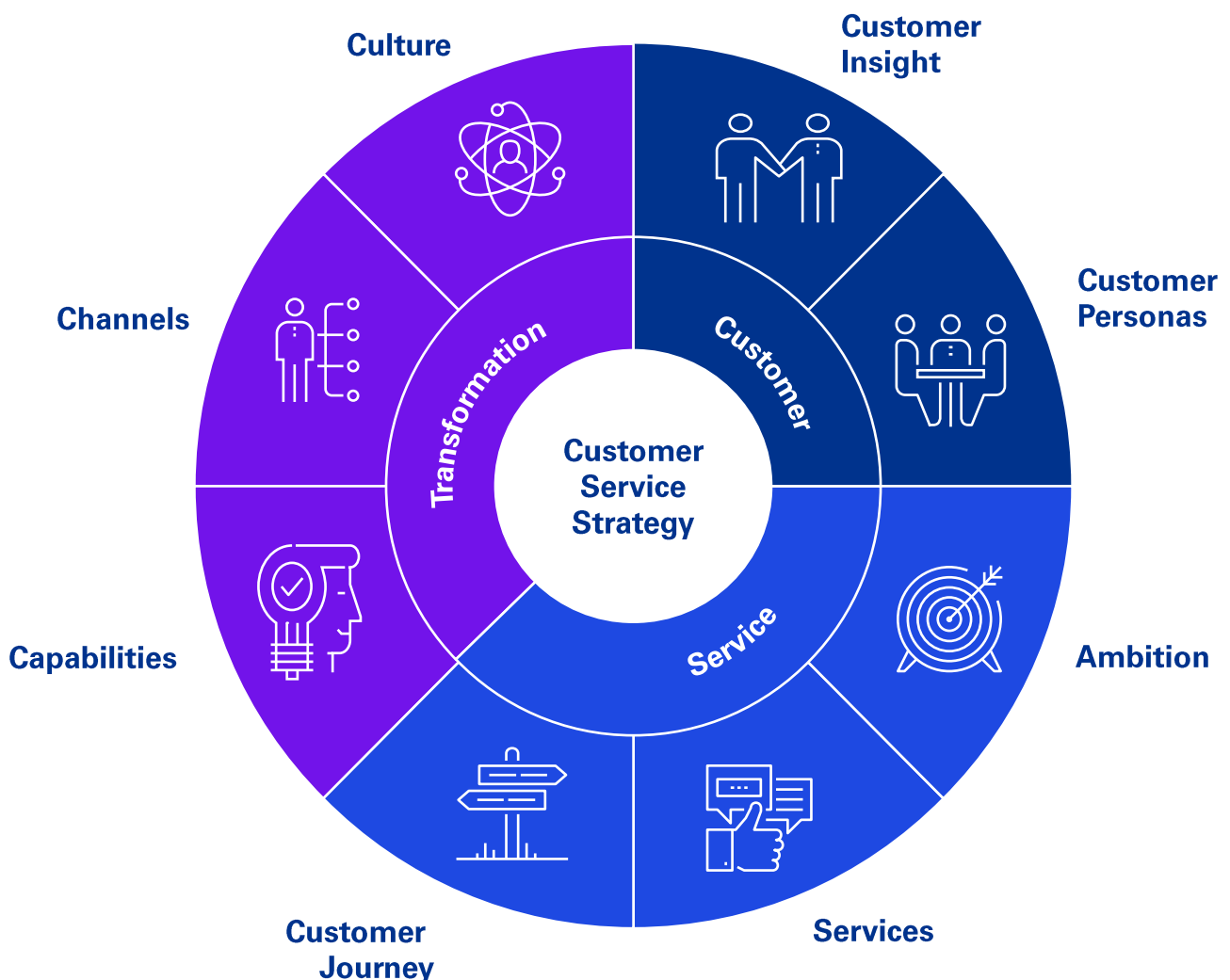




Citizen-led, digitally enabled transformation

Citizen-led, digitally enabled transformation requires a citizen-centric strategy which is informed by deep insight into citizen experiences and underpinned by a citizen-centric culture.

Starting by understanding who the users of your services are, what are their needs and what makes them different will help get one step further to being able to design services around the people that will adopt them. Starting with Insight unlocks the rest of the journey needed to deliver truly citizen centric care.



Who: Customer	 Customer Insight	Segmenting & understanding the customer population through insight
	 Customer Personas	Developing customer personas
What: Service	 Ambition	The future vision (true north) and design principles that drive future decision making
	 Services	The core services and support provided to customers
	 Customer Journey	Stages / sections of the end-to-end journey of customers
How: Transformation	 Capabilities	How the targeted experience gets delivered
	 Channels	The channels through which the customer engages with / accesses services (for any given touchpoint across the journey)
	 Culture	Identity, culture and purpose – what leadership, colleague experience, tools and measurement are needed

Contact us if you want to become a citizen leader

Reach out to our public sector citizen experience and local council experts if you want to insight real change and turn the dial in next years results.



Jo Thomson

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