

Customer Strategy

Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Working for a better future



Introduction

Our corporate plan sets out four priorities:



High Aspirations



Enabling everyone to enjoy life to the full



Create thriving environments



Provide good value council services

To deliver on these priorities everything we do for Lincolnshire must be focused around delivering services that empower customers and meets their needs.

This customer strategy will enhance the skills of our colleagues to ensure that they deliver a high quality customer experience. We want to increasingly enable customers to operate independently and interact with the council at a time and in a manner that best meets their needs. Customer service, and this strategy aren't just about transactions. They are also about how we share information to enable our communities to thrive, be sustainable and progressive. To deliver our corporate plan and this strategy we must ensure that we both meet growing and evolving customer expectations whilst also keeping a careful eye on the bottom line.

The customer strategy sees us utilising principles of the digital strategy to enhance the ways that our services are accessed and delivered. Our customers increasingly want to access our services through digital channels. We will utilise modern technologies to ensure that this channel of choice is as effective and efficient as possible whilst still ensuring that those who are unable to interact with us in this way receive the help and support that they need.



Customer Vision

Our Customer Vision statement is...

"We will deliver strong, joined up services, that are designed to ensure we are able to meet our customer's current and future needs."

We have set out our work to achieve this in 3 priorities:



Customer Experience

We put our customers at the heart of what we do, and we will ensure our employees are clear and fair when communicating with customers.



Voice of the Customer

Ensuring a strong customer voice across the organisation, working with customers to improve the way that we do things.



Our Future Offer

Enabling the council to be in the best possible place to determine the right operating model from 2024 onwards.



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

“ Putting our customers at the heart of what we do and ensuring our employees are clear and fair when communicating with customers. ”

OBJECTIVE 1:

Developing employees to provide good quality customer services

From our research with employees, at the moment customer service can be seen as the responsibility of our dedicated customer service centre. Over the next 3 years we will make sure that providing good customer services is everybody's responsibility. This includes using appropriate language when communicating, and being transparent and open about our timelines for service delivery and our decision making process.

We will develop and support our staff to further improve how customer services are delivered to ensure that we provide a consistently good customer experience. This will include the creation of a customer charter that sets a standard for how all our employees engage in a fair, polite, and compassionate way, using clear and straight forward language.

Our principles and our charter will be applied even when we are not communicating with a customer directly. By providing information in a clear format and timely manner to other teams that engage with customers, we are working as 'One Council' to be transparent and effective in our delivery of customer services.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Reviewing how we deliver services from end to end in order to make it as quick and easy as possible to get to the right outcome

We will work with each other and with partners to help deliver joined-up services that are based around customer need. A customer's experience with us often involves multiple teams, including our customer service centre, our back office teams, our front-line services and partner organisations. Meeting a customer's need may involve multiple systems and cross-over multiple business processes.

We will dedicate effort and attention to evaluate how services are delivered, making sure they are aligned around the needs of the customer rather than the needs of individual teams or systems. In our communications we will use clear language to help our customers understand what services they are eligible for and how to access them in the most convenient way.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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OBJECTIVE 3:

Enhancing our digital solutions to enable self-service and more resources to be directed to those who need our help the most

Our research with customers tells us that people often contact us by phone or email because they struggle with finding what they need on our website. As part of delivering upon our digital strategy we will make digital the channel of choice, so that anyone that wants to engage with us digitally can do so confidently. We will do this by designing services in a way which is being mobile-friendly, utilises modern technology, and is underpinned by joined-up support processes. This, will help the majority of our customers communicate with us at a time that best suits them, without being constrained to the opening hours of our customer service centre.

Self-serve options reduce the cost of service delivery, and will allow us to spend more time and resource working with customers that need our support. Our digital solutions will also enable our teams to be more effective in managing and responding to customer requirements in a consistent way.



VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

“ Ensuring a strong customer voice across the organisation, working with customers to improve the way that we do things. ”

OBJECTIVE 1:

Creation of customer advocates to embed the voice of the customer in all that we do

We aim to complement the knowledge and professionalism of our employees with customer input. We will do this by creating a group of customer advocates, that are passionate about local services and that can help us as we design new processes, policies and strategies. We already engage with our customers regularly to understand their views and to refine our service delivery. By adopting the principles of our community strategy we are looking to further improve our engagement processes and approach, and we will be implementing a new engagement platform that will enable us to be at the forefront of engagement and dialogue within Local Government.

Through this customer strategy we will go beyond our statutory obligations to hear what customers say. Our customer advocates will engage and consult on the way we design and deliver services to make sure they meet customer's needs and expectations. This is to ensure that our processes are designed to deliver a great customer experience. We will consult with customer advocates on how we can work with our partners and our suppliers to help customers access a range of public and third sector services in the way that best suits their needs. We will make sure our customer advocates are representative of the communities we serve, so that a broad range of views and different access needs are considered.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Work with customers to test and refine our processes and procedures

Our customer advocate group will work beyond initial design and implementation. In line with our aspiration to be digital by design, we will work in an iterative way in how we build and implement new processes. We will work with customers to develop, build, test and improve solutions. This will give customers the opportunity to tell us what matters the most to them and identify where enhancements could further improve the customer experience.

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OBJECTIVE 3:

A focus on feedback – we don’t wait to be told – we’re actively finding out what people think and we’re seen to respond

We will work proactively with our customers, their advocates and our teams to understand how things are going and dedicate attention and effort to resolve problems before they become major issues. To deliver a good customer experience we must consistently improve the quality of the service over time, responding to feedback and data to find better ways of doing things. To do this we will improve the feedback loop between our different teams so that insight we get from customers is triangulated with data on how services are being used, to inform how we work.

After making changes, we will go back to the data, to check that the improvements have had a positive impact, and look for opportunities to enhance our offer in collaboration with our customer advocates, our colleagues and our partners.



FUTURE OFFER

“ Enabling the council to be in the best possible place to determine the right operating model from 2024 onwards. ”

OBJECTIVE 1:

Determine our future operating model

The Council currently has a long-standing arrangement which sees our customer service centre being run by an external service provider. The contract is due for renewal in 2024. Over the period of this strategy we will evaluate how we can best deliver customer services in the future in order to meet the needs of our customers. To do this we will look at the entire customer journey, from when a customer needs us, to how contact is made, to how it is picked up, triaged and handled between the customer services department and other teams across the Council.

We will prioritise taking a One Council approach to make sure that everybody involved in the customer journey is measuring their performance in a way that collectively delivers the best-value experience to the customer. Sometimes this may mean spending more time with a customer on the initial call, rather than passing it on to another team. It may mean supporting the customer to show them how they can self-serve by finding the information they need or completing a webform online, so that next time the customer can help themselves at a time that suits them. It will also involve looking at the use of technology and data to make sure our people, processes and systems are all organised around the needs of the customer.

As part of this customer strategy we will appraise our options for potential delivery models, by assessing all the capabilities we need to deliver customer services in the future. This will cover our skills, processes, people, technology and data. In the meantime, we will continue to work collaboratively with our provider to look for opportunities to improve performance within the framework of our existing agreement.



FUTURE OFFER

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OBJECTIVE 2:

Investigate opportunities for future innovation

As part of preparing for the future, we will investigate what the opportunities for innovation are. This will include utilising technologies like chatbots and automated intelligence to improve the way we do things and to meet future customer expectations.

As customers become more self-sufficient we must consider how services will be delivered in the future. We will aim to resolve issues earlier, before customers inform us. As we develop our technology and data capabilities, we will look for opportunities to experiment with how we can work more proactively within services. By being more data-driven and innovative with how services are run, we can target our resources to proactively resolve issues before they arise. This will improve customer experience and could help us reduce costs.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Focus on data collection to provide customer insight

Every day we collect hundreds of data points that we can utilise to build a picture of how customers engage with us. Every phone call, written complaint, and half-completed webform is a snapshot of an individual customer's experience. Combined, this is a bank of information that we can tap into to guide us on how we run our services.

Over the next few years we will put a strong focus on data collection. In collaboration with our data teams, we will make sure we are set up to have robust insight into customer behaviour that we can visualise and analyse to improve our services. We will supplement our own data with customer data from available market data sets to further enhance the understanding of our customer demographics and behaviour.

We will review our metrics and benchmark our performance alongside other organisations, both public and private sector, to help us learn and to prepare us for delivering better customer services in the future.

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