

Coffs Harbour City Council Customer Service Strategy 2016 – 2018



A new way of delivering customer service



Helping to achieve the 2030 Community Vision

A New and Improved Way of Delivering Customer Service

Council is changing the way it delivers customer service through the implementation of this Customer Service Strategy: a strategy that outlines an improved way of delivering customer service through a new 'Customer Enquiry/Resolution (CER) Model'.

The new CER Model has a focus on the following main elements:

- ❖ Using customer engagement and participation in the review and, where required, redesign of services.
- ❖ Development of customer self-service functionality for those who can access online services, thus leaving Council staff to concentrate on complex enquiry work and high-need customers.
- ❖ Progression towards a more resolution-focussed customer service function.

The Model will provide positive outcomes for both Council and our customers, including:

- ✓ More options for the customer
- ✓ Improved responses and consistent resolution for the customer
- ✓ Reduced transaction costs for Council
- ✓ Fewer transactions requiring Council staff intervention

The Model has a target of resolving **80% of customer enquiries/requests at the first point of contact** - significantly improving current levels of customer service.

The projects and tasks identified in this strategy work towards meeting the desired outcomes and targets of the Model.

What is the Customer Service Strategy for?

Council recognises that it is in the service industry with the aim to create a positive experience for all our customers and the wider community. We want to be recognised as an organisation with the customer at the heart of everything we do.

The Customer Service Strategy informs both customers and staff about the key focus areas to improve our current levels of customer service over the next three years.

This strategy also supports a number of 'Performance Indicators and Outcomes' in Council's Target Operating Model (TOM) – which describes the 'future state' of Coffs Harbour City Council.

Implementation of the Strategy

The successful implementation of the Strategy is dependent on the roll-out of a range of new or upgraded systems. These are complex programs and projects operating in a rapidly changing hardware and software environment for which timelines can change continuously. For this reason, the timelines listed in the following tables are indicative only and will be amended if required as the implementation of the Strategy proceeds.

Target Operating Model (TOM) - Performance Indicators and Outcomes for our Customers

All activities and services provided by Council are to achieve an outcome. Indicators measure whether those outcomes are being achieved. The TOM identifies outcomes for an individual customer as well as for the whole community.

The key outcome for an individual customer is that they are satisfied with the service they have received. This is balanced by the Council having to provide them with that service at a known cost. The customer perceives the cost to be good value for money.

Performance Indicators

These are the measures by which Council will gauge its performance in relation to individuals that do business with Council.

- ❖ **Customer Experience** – The experience of a customer will be seen through the eyes of the customer, not how the Council may think it has handled the customer issue. For example, a customer's phone call may have been answered within 5 seconds, but that may not have impacted positively for the customer if they experience being handed off without having their issue resolved.
- ❖ **Customer Response** - This is a measure of both the timeliness with which a customer's issue is resolved as well as qualitatively, how the issue was dealt with. Was the issue resolved, was the customer satisfied with how they were treated and if the Council couldn't help them, was the explanation or the manner in which they were referred elsewhere courteous and helpful?
- ❖ **Direct Costs** - Direct costs refer to materials, labour and expenses related to and used to produce a product or service. For example, this may include all the materials required to patch a section of road, the equipment and the time of the person(s) undertaking the patching.
- ❖ **Indirect Costs** - Indirect costs are costs that are not direct costs, but are nonetheless incurred in being able to provide a service. Using the example above, the indirect costs may include the time of the supervisor of the maintenance team, a portion of the depot costs and Information Technology costs.

Performance Outcomes

The performance outcomes are the results that Council would expect to be achieved with each individual customer service transaction.

- ❖ **Customer Satisfaction** - Customer satisfaction is a measure of the degree to which a product or service meets the customer's expectations.
- ❖ **Value for Money** - Value for money is the perception of the buyer or receiver of goods and/or services. Proof of good value for money is in believing or concluding that the goods/services received were worth the price paid.

- ❖ **Cost of Service** - Cost of service is total cost (direct and indirect) of delivering a product or service.
- ❖ **Business Commerciality** – While the customer might consider they have received value for money and the total cost of the service is known, it is vital that the transaction or service meets the Council’s business requirements. The cost to Council is affordable, competitive and within budget.

Objectives of the Customer Service Strategy

The following objectives have been identified as being important elements in Council delivering a new and improved level of customer service:

1. **Process improvement driven by customer need**
2. **Streamline access and delivery of services**
3. **A more resolution-focussed customer service function**
4. **Enhancing Council’s e-business capabilities**
5. **Implementation of corporate customer service training**
6. **Development of Council’s community engagement framework**

These objectives also support the commitments made through Council’s Customer Service Charter to provide excellent customer service through:

- Prompt and efficient services
- Easy access to our public services
- Assistance if required when using our services
- Friendly and professional service
- Accurate and consistent information

1. Process improvement driven by customer need

Process Re-engineering and Service Redesign

It is imperative to have processes driven by customer need (customer demand). An important consideration is to minimise any unnecessary parts of a process so that duplication and other inefficiencies can be removed.

Council is committed to 'continuous improvement' and will endeavour to streamline and simplify our processes wherever possible. Council will continue to utilise process re-engineering techniques having an emphasis on delivering efficient and effective outcomes.

It is also important for Council to engage with its customers when seeking their participation in the redesign of services. Service transformation, while having an aim to improve service accessibility and usability for our customers – has a focus on the design of the service and how they are delivered for the customer.

Regional Collaboration

Council will promote and facilitate collaboration within the region and the Local Government sector to review and improve systems of service delivery.

Information and Communication Technology

Council appreciates that in order to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, new tools and technologies may be required. Therefore, new technologies will be considered to support easier access to Council services.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Implementation of a new corporate Customer Request Management (CRM) System. <i>This new system will improve internal processes on how staff receive and process customer requests. This will result in improved service levels around timeliness and customer communication.</i>	June 2016
Upgrade of corporate Records Management System. <i>This upgrade to Council's existing records system will improve internal processes and gain efficiencies around record / information management.</i>	June 2016
Implementation of new corporate Payroll System. <i>This new system will result in process improvements and efficiencies through better integration with existing corporate systems.</i>	July 2016
Implementation of new corporate Asset Management System. <i>This new system will result in process improvements and efficiencies through better integration with existing corporate systems.</i>	July 2016
Further service reviews and process re-engineering - through 'continuous improvement programs' and regional collaboration.	Ongoing

2. Streamline access and delivery of services

Making it as easy as possible for customers to access Council services and for Council to deliver those services to its customers are important focus areas. Council is undertaking a number of initiatives to improve both service accessibility and delivery, including:

- Improved accessibility of information about Council services on our website.
- The collection of additional customer information to enable customer verification and more cost-effective communication channels.
- The consolidation of system databases and customer information.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Commence the collection of additional data from customers. <i>This data will not only support better customer communication via more cost effective channels (e.g. e-mail, SMS) but provide a means for customer identity verification – to reduce the need for written requests / applications.</i>	From June 2016
Review of Council's corporate website. <i>This review will include input from customers to improve online content and customer usability. This will include useability for those people with a disability (audio and visual enhancements).</i>	From July 2016
Development of 'new residents' online information package. <i>This information package will have a focus on informing new residents of Council's activities and services.</i>	September 2016
Development of an 'Information Management Strategy'. <i>The objective of this strategy will be to identify and implement 'opportunities for improvement' around the use and accessibility of information for staff and customers.</i>	September 2016
Promotion of customer self-service functionality using online platforms. <i>This promotion of online services will be done using libraries, mobile information booths and local media channels.</i>	Ongoing

3. A more resolution -focussed customer service function

Resolution – At the First Point of Contact

A significant project will be the increased emphasis on a more resolution-focused customer service function.

Work has begun to improve the number of customer enquiries which are resolved at the ‘first point of contact’. Further investigations and prototyping will be undertaken over the next twelve months to increase the level of requests/enquiries resolved through our customer service functions.

This will be supported through the establishment of ‘Standard Operating Procedures’ and ‘Knowledge Management Systems’ to empower Council’s ‘Customer Resolution Officers’ to resolve customer enquiries/requests at the first point of contact.

The target is to have at least 80% of customer enquiries resolved at the ‘first point of contact’ by the end of 2016.

Strong Internal Service Partnerships

In order to provide a high standard of customer service to our customers, it is crucial that internal relationships and partnerships are strong and working well. Council will develop internal Service Level Agreements (SLA) between our various service providers in order for them to operate effectively.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Implementation of Council’s new ‘Customer Resolution Team’. <i>This team of staff will have a focus on providing customer resolution at the first point of contact for all channels of customer interaction.</i>	April 2016
Development of internal Service Level Agreements - <i>between internal service providers to ensure business outcomes are delivered in an effective and timely manner.</i>	From June 2016
Development of a continuous training program for Council’s ‘Customer Resolution Officers’ - <i>to maintain skill levels to meet ‘first point of contact’ customer resolution targets.</i>	From July 2016
Implementation of service performance measures for customer service – <i>including processes to determine levels of customer satisfaction.</i>	From July 2016
Review of corporate telephone system. <i>This review will be undertaken to investigate improved service provision and costs.</i>	2016/2017
Implementation of a new customer complaints management framework. <i>This framework will include new procedures to ensure efficient and effective resolution of customer complaints / feedback.</i>	2016/2017

4. Enhancing Council's e-business capabilities

Increasing electronic accessibility to Council information and services is another core area for customer service improvement. The main way we will do this is through our corporate website. It is important for customers to easily access information as well as access services such as making payments, lodging applications and submitting and tracking service requests (e.g. repairing potholes, animal complaints).

The future direction of this service channel will involve increased electronic access by a customer to their information to improve self-service capabilities such as viewing past requests or account transactions.

Enhancing Council's e-business capabilities will both meet the increasing needs and expectations of customers in this area, as well as reduce pressure on our traditional channels of customer contact via telephone and service counters.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Development of Council's Customer Request Management (CRM) system - to include customer interface via corporate website (e-Requests).	2016/2017
Introduction of web forms and customer online portal services on Council's corporate website – <i>This functionality will enable customers to view account transactions and apply for various services online 24/7.</i>	Commence 2016/2017
Implementation of online booking system - <i>to enable customers to book and, if required, make payment for use of Council facilities and services.</i>	2016/2017
Implementation of a Short Message Service (SMS) subscription service. <i>This service will replace more costly communication channels such as letters and phone calls.</i>	2017/2018

5. Implementation of corporate customer service training

We place a lot of importance on the training and development of our staff. We realise that this is crucial to ensuring our skills and abilities are continually improving, and training is an important part of pursuing consistency of service across a large and diverse organisation.

It is envisaged that new and existing staff will participate in customer service training which will incorporate information regarding customer service expectations and the commitments made to our customers and the community.

A customer service training program will be developed to cater for improved awareness of customer service expectations.

This training will also provide staff with an understanding of 'their link in the service chain' regardless of what role they are performing.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Development of a corporate customer service training package - to improve understanding and expectations on service delivery and customer service. Staff Performance Management Framework to include customer service as a core competency for all staff.	2016/2017

6. Development of Council's community engagement framework

The development of Council's community engagement framework will support the organisation to deliver appropriate communication that will:

- Keep the community informed about Council's activities, services, events, policies, strategies and programs; and
- Involve the community in dialogue about the provision of services and planning for the future.

Online communications will be Council's core communication platform. The development of this framework will incorporate action plans to improve Council's current external communication and community engagement processes including:

- Easier access to information on Council's services and activities.
- The promotion e-business opportunities provided by Council (channel shift).
- The further development of social media platforms for both communication and engagement.
- The rationalisation of print media.
- Methods of assessing our performance (customer satisfaction).
- Methods to better understand our customer needs, both now and in the future.

Key Tasks / Projects

What	When
Development of Council's community engagement framework	2016/2017

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