



Service Strategy for Customers

2015 – 2020



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Foreword

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Our vision is to ensure service users are at the heart of how we work and we will do everything possible to provide services that generate very high levels of satisfaction.

We will work to ensure that the whole Council together with relevant external contractors operate as “one team” from first contact to service resolution and that any hand offs between different parts of the delivery chain are seamless. We will develop processes so that managers always have their “finger on the pulse” in terms of how their services are being delivered for customers with good knowledge of any negative customer experiences. We will also seek to ensure that there is clarity around responsibility and accountability for service delivery within a matrix management structure. We want to create a culture where all feel empowered to act to make this vision a reality.

Services will be systematically redesigned so that we focus predominantly on doing the things that add value for the service user with an increasing focus on digital first. We will aim to design systems that build quality in so that they always work right first time and minimise the impact of fraud and error. We will continuously seek to maximise the potential of existing and new technology as part of this approach, building new kinds of strategic relationships with key suppliers in order to deliver the best possible solutions. We will always seek opportunities to improve productivity in delivering customer journeys, such as through promotion and marketing of digital access/transactions, reductions in staff processing times, removal of waste from processes and supporting vulnerable people to live more independently.

We will continue to build a rich picture of the communities we serve, one that describes the different groups within it, including an understanding of behaviours and why and how people access our services and those of our partners. This insight will help us to design services that are more personalised and that will better meet the needs of different people.

Our immediate goal is to meet each unique demand and need when it is demanded – right first time every time with great user experiences. We will empower our staff to challenge the way we do things if we are not achieving this. However, we want to go further than this and in the future we will increasingly seek to be more pro-active with vulnerable people and identify and commission relevant related services over and above what might be a single ‘presenting’ issue. This will require excellent levels of collaboration both across the Council as well as with partners.

1.Introduction

We will provide high performing services that are efficient and meet customer needs

Taken from the Melton Borough Council's list of Corporate Priorities

Our Service Strategy for Customers sets out how we will respond to changing customer needs by improving services, engaging with the community and empowering them to seek solutions.

The current climate that we are working in sees continued austerity, increased customer demand and expectations for services along with complex social and economic needs. We want to ensure that we are addressing these issues in the delivery of customer-focused services.

To do this our services need to respond to customer demand, make the best use of technology and work in partnerships with key public service agencies and the voluntary sector.

This will involve redesigning our services to respond to the constantly changing environment while enabling the customers to be empowered to help themselves through digital self serve and support services.

Though this we anticipate a channel shift in how our services are accessed which will lead to reduced cost in service delivery and better value for money in service delivery.

Other corporate strategies and policies support our approach to customer service and access to services

Communications Strategy ~ Equalities Policy ~ ICT Strategy ~ Community Partnership ~ Information Security and Sharing Policies ~ Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Values

The Authority have adopted 5 values which underpin this strategy

- Performance
- Resilience
- Flexibility
- Customer Focus
- Respect

Since our first Customer Service Strategy in 2005 the way we deliver services to our customer has changed. We have:

- Worked closely with our partners and co-located to new offices with them to improve joint working
- Introduced a Customer Relationship Management system to help us understand the single view of the customer
- Rolled out face to face customer service at Children's Centres in Melton Mowbray
- Put resources into Customer Insight to better understand the customers we are serving and introduced a Consultation and Engagement toolkit.
- Enabled our Customer Service Advisors to deal with more enquiries at the first point of contact
- Redesigned our website and introduced some transactional online services.
- Implemented Govmetric to monitor customer satisfaction levels
- Focus on the outcomes for the Customer rather than the service delivering it.
- Adopted a "One Team" approach to delivering service

2. Customer Service Principles

The principles set out in our 2005 strategy have influenced how we have delivered and redesigned services. They are :

Accessibility	We will provide and keep under review a variety of access channels that are convenient, intuitive and appropriate
Reliability	We will ensure that services are designed to ensure delivery is right first time, seamless and as expected
Responsiveness	We will publish standards covering service resolution timescales which are challenging but achievable
Professionalism	We will ensure that all service contacts are professional, empathetic and welcoming.
Assurance	Services will be delivered in ways that inspire confidence and trust.
Empathy	We will give caring and individual attention to users.

We will continue to ensure that the needs of our customers are being met through these and that services are being provided economically, efficiently and effectively, however we know that we need to consider additional principles in today's climate.

Our approach now is more focused on influencing the way our customers interact with us. We want them to move to channels that are more efficient which means we need to focus on designing and delivering high quality digital services which reduce fraud and error and increase customer's trust and confidence.

3.Culture and Leadership

At Melton we have put Customer Focus at the heart of the organisation and there is commitment from leaders and senior management to support this.

It is vital that we provide customer focused leadership across the whole of the Council and any appropriate provider partners. This needs to ensure that achieving excellent customer experiences from first point of contact to service resolution and reducing demand appropriately are paramount in everyone's thinking all of the time. Whilst we want to resolve as many issues as possible at first point of contact, we must recognise that the service delivery chain will often cut across different council services and external contractors and we must ensure that for the customer any hand offs are seamless. This requires effective implementation of a one team culture, a collective ownership of this strategy and a collective commitment to provide the leadership needed for implementation.

Customer Focus is one of our corporate values and core competencies, which feeds into our recruitment and selection process. Customer focus is reiterated throughout the induction process and staff are actively encouraged to participate in customer service training and promote examples of excellent customer service. We want to make sure staff feel empowered to solve problems, make suggestions and continuously improve.

We recognise that some of our most vulnerable or regular customers will be able to improve their skills, confidence and employability through enhanced digital skills and independence. Our ethos is to encourage independence by walking alongside our customers through their journey and shift the culture from doing everything for them.

4. Service Design

The successful delivery of this strategy will rely on significant changes to the way we design and deliver our service so that we eliminate waste and focus on what adds values to the customer. To ensure we do add value we will work with our partners and customers to challenge the way we deliver our end to end services and co design new processes.

4.1 Knowing our customers

We want to have an in-depth understanding of our customers.

We will use customer segmentation tools and profiling to build a picture of our main customer groups and their characteristics. Other methods such as focus groups and surveys will help us to understand their needs and preferences.

We will analyse and use the information we collect through consultation, engagement and feedback to understand what adds value and we will continually update and improve our services to deliver better outcomes for the customers.

We will identify hard to reach groups and individuals and involve and consult with them to ensure the views of those with different needs are being heard

Customer satisfaction is important and will be measured and the results published along with any action that is being taken as a result of feedback or complaints.

A corporate consultation plan will be drawn up to incorporate the timescales and nature of the consultation that is being carried out but also to consider the different ways that consultation can be carried out to ensure that adequate data is gathered for use into relevant service initiatives or improvements that are to be carried and within a relevant timeframe.

4.2 Simple processes

We want simpler processes which give greater flexibility to respond to rapidly changing circumstances

We will enable the customer to have a great user experience from start to finish, that is from the initial contact with the Council to service resolution – not when it is passed to another team member.

We will make the best use of the technology available to develop online transactions that are trusted and reliable. They reduce error and fraud and are an efficient method for service delivery.

Process are designed to deliver better outcomes for the customer holistically, across the services.

Waste and duplication will be designed out of our processes to ensure they are lean and therefore efficient and effective.

Baseline information will be used to understand the service provision in terms of demand, access, quality and cost. This will be used to measure the efficiency and cost of service delivery on an on-going basis.

Processes are integrated with the systems we and our partners use, where possible, to allow information sharing in line with our protocols.



4.3 Access Channels

We want Customers to obtain resolution at the first point of contact regardless of the channel they choose to access.

Digital take up will be promoted as services come online and assisted services offered to those who require support in accessing these. Channel shift will be measured and reported alongside the relevant cost of service delivery for each channel so value for money and efficiency targets can be met.



We will evaluate how customers access our services in order to identify possible improvements.

We will look at co-ordinated delivery of services with our public sector and voluntary sector partners to improve the experience for the customer.

All access channels will be considered in service design including the use of alternative and emerging channels such as texting, social media, webchat and new channels that arise. We recognise the importance of these new channel and how they can be used to improve service delivery.



5. Customer experience

Findings from consultation exercises and Govmetric show that in general customers are happy with the service they receive from the Council.



Whichever channel people choose to use we will expect customers to have a great experience from initial access to complete service resolution.

We will ensure that where services cannot be fully resolved at first point of contact that any hand offs are smooth and efficient and that service staff or contract staff contribute appropriately to deliver resolution to agreed service standards which will be published for customers to understand.

We recognise the continued importance of face to face services for our most vulnerable residents. We will continue for the foreseeable future to offer face to face services at Parkside and in our children's/community centres which are located in our priority neighbourhoods. Where we are dealing with vulnerable people we will seek to move towards a more triage based pro-active approach to identifying need. This recognises that vulnerable people often have multiple levels of complexity in their lives which will usually be much more than a single presenting issue.

Many of these people can be hard to engage so we need to take advantage of their engagement when we have it. This will need us to consider appropriate skills and training to carry out this triage activity as it will require a new mindset. Over the medium to longer term we will be looking to support people who lack digital skills to enable them to take advantage of digital opportunities and move more and more people to digital self serve channels.

At the present time the telephone channel remains an important channel. This is because we do not yet have a transactional website and high speed broadband coverage is not present in some parts of the Borough. When we have made significant progress with transactional website services and as high speed broadband is rolled out across the Borough it would be appropriate to keep this under review.

5.1 Quality

We will make sure customers are aware of the service they can expect from the Council and ensure we deliver what we promise

Services will set challenging but realistic standards and performance indicators for service delivery. These will be communicated to the customer and performance against these standards will be monitored and published.

Where we have example for delivering excellent service through feedback and comments, we will make sure this is communicated both internally and externally.

We will make sure customers have a high quality service that generates trust in confidence in the services provided across the Council

Staff will be recruited with the right behaviours and skills to deliver excellent customer service. They will receive training of customer service and recognise Customer Focus as a core competency for the Council discussed at the annual appraisal.

We will identify the customers needs at the first point of contact and aim to resolve queries as quickly as possible regardless of the access channel and the service area dealing with the query.

5.2 Communication and information

We will ensure that we create dialogue with the customer and provide accurate and detailed information

The information being delivered to the customer will be accurate, up to date and accessible. Written information will be in Plain English and meet our email and digital standards. It will be available in a wide range of formats that meet the individual needs of the customer.

We will share information across the Authority and with our partners in line with our information sharing and security protocols. This avoids duplication of work and provides a more efficient service for the customer.

We will check that customers have understood the information they have been given and seek their views and feedback.

When we need to deliver unwelcome information or news we will make sure it is done respectfully and with empathy

We will clarify with our Customer what the next steps are and check that they have understood what is happening with they query or question.

We will ensure the communication methods we use to get back to the Customer is a channel that suits them

5.3 Complaints and problems

We want to put matters right when things go wrong – but also prevent it from happening again

We will identify any dips in our performance and explain these to the customers. We will take action to resolve these matters and strategies in place to prevent reoccurrence.

Staff will be made aware of our complaints policy and trained on dealing effectively with complaints that are received. These will be reviewed and monitored and feed into reviews for improving services.

We will empower and train staff to resolve customers issues in the best possible way

In addition to formal complaints we will make the best use of soft intelligence from a range of channels such as social media to continue to improve services

We will learn from our mistakes and analyse complaints corporately on a quarterly basis

Complaints are valuable feedback from customers and the effective handling of them can improve the impression of the organisation and satisfaction levels of customers. Effective complaint handling can be achieved by following the 'WELCOME' approach:

The WELCOME Approach

W	Welcome the complaint
E	Express regret & empathise
L	Listen
C	Collect information & clarify the real issue
O	Offer to consider their way forward or ideas
M	Make sure the way forward is agreed
E	Enquire by following up later