

Customer Focus Strategy

Version: Draft

Date updated: Adopted Day Month Year

Responsible Department: Governance

1. Purpose

The Customer Focus Strategy (the Strategy) details Council's commitment to having a customer focus and provides a framework for the organisation to deliver services in a manner that has the customer at the centre of its business while meeting the operational and efficiency requirements of the organisation.

2. Definitions

Council	means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989
Councillors	means the individuals holding the office of a member of Casey City Council
Council officer	means the Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.
Customers	means an individual, business or organisation that utilises the services of Council.
Channels	means the ways customers can contact Council (e.g. web, email, phone, face-to-face, letter, social media)
Contractor or Service Provider	means a person, company or other entity that undertakes a contract to provide materials or labour to perform a service or do a job.

3. Scope

The Strategy applies to all services delivered directly or indirectly by Council and will be the responsibility of all Council officers.

4. Context

Casey City Council is a large and growing municipality that delivers a vast and varied catalogue of services to the community. As an acknowledged leader in front-line customer service, the Strategy has been developed to drive a commitment to the customer across the organisation.

Council policy documents change from time to time and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy at www.casey.vic.gov.au/policiesstrategies to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively you may contact Customer Service on 9705 5200.

The Strategy provides a framework to support transformational change across Council, to apply customer 'thinking' processes and culture, and to build 'ownership' across all functions of Council. While achieving this, the Strategy aims to identify opportunities to improve efficiency (reduce the cost to serve) while also providing more effective service by improving the customer experience.

The Strategy is future focused in recognition that technology enables customers to interact with services in a more convenient and accessible manner. The Strategy will understand, anticipate and respond to these technology developments and identify opportunities and change required in Council practices and processes.

Principles of a Customer Focus Strategy

The following principles have been used to guide the development of the Strategy. The Strategy should:

- Define ways to capture and use data (e.g. extend and build knowledge and data about customers, their need and the services provided).
- Enhance Council's economic and financial sustainability (e.g. align and support existing projects and investments) by seeking ways to reduce cost to serve whilst enhancing customer satisfaction.
- Maximise the value from technology and workplace investment (e.g. use technology to make it easier to do business with Council).
- Optimise the performance of contact methods (channels). These include digital (website, email, social media), face-to-face (customer service centres and other service points), phone (contact centre, council staff) and letters.
- Enable continued leadership in the sector (e.g. build on existing strengths in front line customer service, continue to support employees with skills, knowledge and enthusiasm, and foster an inclusive customer service culture).

Framework for a Customer Focus Strategy

To build and embed a customer focus requires taking a cross functional approach throughout the organisation. It also requires understanding the relationships between people, systems, technology and governance. Each of these elements will influence the Strategy and themes, and some will require modifying current practices, policies and business processes relating to how services are delivered. In this way, customer focus becomes an attribute of the culture and style of Council and embedded in the 'way we do things around here'. As a result, the Strategy will build ownership and adoption of customer focus beyond the 'customer service' function itself.

For Council to demonstrate customer focus it will have:

- A clear strategy for how it will design and deliver its services, and well defined purpose and intent regarding customer service which is understood by its employees and contractors.
- A leadership team that is committed and engaged in governing and sponsoring change. Consistent investment of funds and resources to improve customer outcomes is required.
- Business and customer processes, practices and policies that have been reviewed and improved so they support customer needs. These processes will be reviewed from the customer's perspective, and functions and teams in the organisation will work with the end customer in mind.

- People in the organisation that are equipped with knowledge and skills to do their job and are provided with training and development opportunities to support this performance.
- Consistent practice across channels (e.g. web, email, phone, face-to-face, letter) so that customers receive a reliable standard of customer service over time.
- Shared values and culture that support 'being here for the customer' which is evident in every day practices.

5. Strategy

Customer Focus – Strategic Themes

Based on research and consultation, five key themes have been developed to provide purpose, direction and commitment to fostering a customer focused culture across Council. These themes are supported by strategic actions to guide the planning and delivery of services over the next three years.

Strategic Theme 1: Understand and engage with our customer

Council will have a robust understanding of the demand for its services and how they should be provided. Information and data will be collected through formal community engagement/consultation activities and service reviews, and customer satisfaction data will be collected through mystery shopping methods and other means. The preferences of customers will be understood, including the service standards they are willing to pay for, and their levels of satisfaction with services provided.

Strategy 1.1 Implement a program to collect customer insights	Action 1.1.1 Ensure the community engagement principles to be developed through the Community Engagement Strategy are customer focused, and complement the objectives of the Customer Focus Strategy
	Action 1.1.2 Collect data on customers and their needs, preferences by service type, expectations, choices and channels.
	Action 1.1.3 Test current and proposed service models with customers to enable the type of contact customers need (and can afford) to have with the City of Casey.
	Action 1.1.4 Use market research, community engagement and service co-design processes to inform and drive the development of community services and facilities.

Strategic Theme 2: Provide services in easy, accessible, consistent and timely ways

Council will provide easy and appropriate access to its services. That is, customers will be supported to get to the right place the first time and are able to find the required services in an intuitive and time efficient manner. Council will endeavour to complete service needs at the first point of contact and deliver this service to the customer

efficiently. Contact with Council should enhance its reputation as a trusted point of contact and customers should be dealt with consistently.

Strategy 2.1 Develop a channel strategy and targets	Action 2.1.1 Identify how to optimise the features of different channels and how services can be redesigned to use the features.
	Action 2.1.2 Analyse the current and forecast future demand for services by different channels.
	Action 2.1.3 Apply customer demographics and the ways that customers use technology to design, plan and manage channel content and experience.
	Action 2.1.4 Develop channel targets for uptake and use.
Strategy 2.2 Manage channel service, accessibility, consistency and cost	Action 2.2.1 Collect cost-to-serve data on current channel costs, performance and satisfaction for each channel.
	Action 2.2.2 Test use of assisted self-service options.
	Action 2.2.3 Provide a choice of channels that are accessible to all sectors of the community.
Strategy 2.3 Increase use of online channel for transaction services	Action 2.3.1 Provide more services online (e.g. online payments, forms, bookings).
	Action 2.3.2 Develop the website to be the 'first channel of choice'.
	Action 2.3.3 Explore website enhancements to support customer interaction online (e.g. live chat).
Strategy 2.4 Strengthen channel operations and management	Action 2.4.1 Consolidate customer service contact channels to ensure consistency of response, and support resolution of customer matters at first point of contact.
	Action 2.4.2 Integrate all key service counters and telephone service groups as part of a 'service@casey' program.
	Action 2.4.3 Centralise complaint/request registration and management to ensure timely and consistent response practices.
	Action 2.4.4 Develop an organisational approach and system to collect data on channel operations.
Strategy 2.5 Educate and support customers	Action 2.5.1 Educate, inform and provide support to customers to influence channel migration.
Strategy 2.6 Same standard by anyone, anywhere, by any	Action 2.6.1 Be consistent by offering one phone number and a consistent level of service.

device	Action 2.6.2 Require service providers to train their staff in City of Casey customer service behaviours according to City of Casey standards.
	Action 2.6.3 Use 'mystery shopping' type methods to test consistency across all customer service contact points.

Strategic Theme 3: Collect, assess, measure and simplify what we do

Council will understand the cost (and cost drivers) for services and the impacts on demand for these services. A financial performance framework will: develop base line cost of each of the services that the City of Casey provides; define the key drivers of service delivery cost; and develop key performance indicators to track actual cost of service delivery against budget. Regular service reviews will be conducted to measure the quality of service delivery and to improve public value.

Strategy 3.1 Build a research base	Action 3.1.1 Combine the skills and knowledge in customer research, data and financial analysis, performance analysis, and performance improvement methods.
	Action 3.1.2 Work with customer service/channel owners to develop a comprehensive base on which to cost, model and test different service options.
Strategy 3.2 Reduce complexity and make it easy	Action 3.2.1 Implement service reviews from point of customer need to point of resolution.
	Action 3.2.2 Remove unnecessary steps in service design and reduce the need for customer contact.
	Action 3.2.3 Test that high volume forms and invoices are easy to understand, accessible and professionally presented and can, wherever possible, be completed online.

Strategic Theme 4: Equip our staff with the skill, knowledge and attitude to serve

Council is committed to engaging employees that are highly motivated, flexible, and capable of providing high quality, personalised services. Employees will be provided with extensive support and training to make autonomous decisions within a given framework and hold staff accountable for the customer experience.

Strategy 4.1 Enhance knowledge and build base of first contact support.	Action 4.1.1 Continue to build the Customer Service knowledge base and update content on a planned cycle.
	Action 4.1.2 Identify future requirements of the Customer Service knowledge base and explore alternative platforms to deliver this.
	Action 4.1.3 Increase knowledge set/skills and consider re-deployment of staff into the Customer Service team to provide more complex advice.

Strategy 4.2 Recruit and train staff in a customer focused approach.	Action 4.2.1 Continue to provide training to equip staff with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to interact with customers in a range of situations.
	Action 4.2.2 Conduct an 'on boarding' process to re-invigorate the customer focus culture as part of the move to the Casey Cultural Precinct.
	Action 4.2.3 Consider customer service skills as selection criteria in recruitment processes and align with the staff recognition process.
Strategy 4.3 Executive team leads from the front	Action 4.3.1 Be visible and present. The Executive Management Team will spend time on the front-line.

Strategic Theme 5: Deliver on our promise

The customer service standards set by Council will outline what customers can expect and can be delivered repeatedly. Each standard has a defined metric to measure against and there is clear accountability for their delivery.

Strategy 5.1 Report on Customer Service Commitments	Action 5.1.1 Review the customer service commitments to ensure they achieve the balance for both the needs of customers and the business needs of the organisation.
Strategy 5.2 Provide feedback to customers on job progress and completion	Action 5.2.1 Develop a framework that guides when customers should be informed about the progress of their request by providing SMS, email, phone or letter feedback.
Strategy 5.3 Collect and report on service performance	Action 5.3.1 Collect and provide integrated reports on community needs, customer service levels and satisfaction levels to senior executive and Council.
	Action 5.3.2 Make the service performance visible to customers and staff across the organisation using 'performance boards'.

6. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

7. Review

The next biennial review of this document is scheduled for completion by Day Month Year.