

Customer Service Strategy 2016 - 2020

Delivering a 'Customer First' Culture



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Development and Review of the Customer Service Strate	egy3
3. Strategic Alignment	4
4. Our Services – A Snapshot	5
5. Framework for a Customer Service Strategy	6
6. Strategy	7

1. Introduction

Like all other Local Government bodies, Wingecarribee Shire Council's (Council) primary function is to deliver a broad range of quality services to its community.

The delivery methods and the quality of those services (including information) are what is defined as local government customer service. Quality customer service is measured not only by satisfaction with the outcomes but also the quality of processes. These processes and the conduct of staff who administer them are designed by reference to service standards and objectives determined through the analysis of customer needs, preferences and the available resources.

The Fit for the Future reforms challenge all NSW councils to reflect on the services they deliver and ensure optimal delivery models and processes are implemented to meet agreed community standards. It is within the context of the Fit for the Future framework that a comprehensive review of Council's customer services and the development of this Customer Service Strategy (the Strategy) have been carried out.

The Strategy sets out key customer service principles and outlines the actions Council will take to better align with its organisational vision of *Innovation*, *Effectiveness and Strong Leadership*.

The primary focus of this Strategy is on equipping Council with a comprehensive understanding of the developing expectations of its ever-changing demographics and the resources required to meet those expectations.

This understanding will be gained through market research, internal data analysis, service models review, cost analysis, etc. The research results will educate the development of new service standards, methods, processes and objectives; website improvements; staff training; the implementation of effective performance and customer satisfaction monitoring, etc.

The creation of this Strategy is part of a wider ongoing program designed to bring Wingecarribee Shire Council to its goal of being an excellent service provider.

This Strategy is a living document and as such, will be reviewed an updated with progress made.

The Strategy was created in consultation with our customers, staff, Councillors and the Executive Team.

2. Development and Review of the Customer Service Strategy

The broad principles and framework for the development of this Customer Service Strategy were established by Council's Executive Team and discussed with elected members. A Customer Service Improvement Team (CSIT), comprising approximately 25 staff representing a wide range of Council's business areas and staffing grade levels, was instrumental in the development of the strategic themes and action items targeted for the implementation of the Strategy. All Council staff were subsequently provided with an opportunity to give feedback on a draft Strategy, and the document was revised to incorporate this feedback.

3. Strategic Alignment

Wingecarribee 2031

Our Vision

In 2031 we will be...

"A healthy and productive community, learning and living in harmony, proud of our heritage and nurturing our environment."

Delivery Program

Our Vision

"We aim to be an innovative and effective organisation with strong leadership"

Customer Service Principles

- 1. We work with our customers to deliver consistent and high quality services that meet their needs with integrity and accountability.
- 2. We go above and beyond for our customers by encouraging, developing and empowering our staff to take ownership of customer interactions through to resolution, delivering timely and realistic outcomes.
- 3. We provide up-to-date and accurate information and efficient processes, continually striving for improvement and innovative solutions.
- 4. We proactively engage our customers in developing appropriate services that respond to their needs, and seek feedback on our delivery of those services.
- 5. We provide quality choices that are reflective of community needs, which offer easy access to our services and are explained in simple, easy to understand language.

4. Our Services - A Snapshot

Local Government provides some of the largest and most diverse services of any organisation. Wingecarribee Shire Council plays a vital role in the community, providing services in key result areas through:

Representation and Leadership of our Community

Good Governance

- Community engagement
- · Provide a high level of customer service
- · Human resources and business excellence
- · Integrity of systems, data and processes to benefit the community
- Advocate for services and infrastructure to meet existing and future needs
- Provide a motivated, responsive, innovative and performance oriented workforce

Community Wellbeing

Community Services

- · Community wellbeing programs
- · Partnerships with community organisations
- Library services
- Social planning
- · Community events and festivals
- · Arts and Cultural Activities
- · Sporting and recreation facilities, including swimming pools
- Walking and cycling trails
- · Community grants program
- Provide and support youth development programs
- Facilitate high quality services to families and children, young people, the aged, the disabled and the disadvantaged

Public Health and Safety

- · Animal registration and management
- Emergency management
- · Community safety activities

Enhanced Infrastructure and Natural and Built Environment

Roads, Parks and Public Works

- · Building and maintaining roads, bridges and stormwater infrastructure
- · Building, maintaining and operating sewer and water infrastructure
- Providing and maintaining community centres and other public facilities
- Caring for parks, gardens and public cemeteries
- Operating Southern Highlands Regional Livestock Exchange

Environmental Protection

- · Regulation of activities that affect the quality of the environment
- · Bushcare program

Land Use and Development

- · Control and regulate how land is used
- Regulate development and building compliance

Waste Disposal

- Provide waste and recycle collection
- Operate transfer station and landfills
- · Clean streets, footpaths and other public areas

Principles of a Customer Service 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 needs 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 costs while 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. 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).

5. Framework for a Customer Service Strategy

To build and embed a customer focus requires taking a cross-functional approach throughout the organisation. It also requires understanding of 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 service 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 service beyond the 'customer service' function itself.

For Council to demonstrate customer service 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 contact methods (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.

6. Strategy

Customer Service – 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.

The five strategic themes are:

- 1. Understand and engage with our customer
- 2. Provide services in easy, accessible, consistent and timely ways
- 3. Collect, assess, measure and simplify what we do
- 4. Equip our staff with the skill, knowledge and attitude to serve
- 5. Deliver on our promise

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 a variety of 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 Service Strategy.
Action 1.1.2	Collect data on customers and their needs and preferences by service type, expectations, choices and contact methods.
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 Council.
Action 1.1.4	Use market research, community engagement and relevant stakeholder participation 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 CONTACT METHOD STRATEGY AND TARGETS

Action 2.1.1	Identify how to optimise the features of different contact methods 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 contact methods.
Action 2.1.3	Apply customer demographics and the ways that customers use technology to design, plan and manage contact method content and experience.
Action 2.1.4	Develop contact method targets for uptake and use.

STRATEGY 2.2: MANAGE CONTACT METHOD SERVICE, ACCESSIBILITY, CONSISTENCY AND COST

Action 2.2.1	Collect data on current costs, performance and satisfaction for each contact method.
Action 2.2.2	Test use of assisted self-service options.
Action 2.2.3	Provide a choice of contact methods that are accessible to all sectors of the community.

STRATEGY 2.3: INCREASE USE OF ONLINE CONTACT METHOD FOR TRANSACTION SERVICES

Action 2.3.1	Provide more services online (e.g. online payments, forms, bookings).
Action 2.3.2	Develop the useability of the website so it becomes the 'first contact method of choice'.
Action 2.3.3	Explore website enhancements to support customer interaction online (e.g. live chat).

STRATEGY 2.4: STRENGTHEN CONTACT METHOD OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Action 2.4.1	Consolidate customer service contact methods to ensure clarity of staff responsibilities and consistency of response, and support resolution of customer matters at first point of contact.
Action 2.4.2	Introduce a Customer Relationship Management system to ensure timely and consistent response practices for complaint/request registration and management.
Action 2.4.3	Develop an integrated and efficient organisational approach and system to collect data on contact method operations.

STRATEGY 2.5: EDUCATE AND SUPPORT CUSTOMERS

Action 2.5.1	Educate, inform and provide support to customers to influence contact method
	migration.

STRATEGY 2.6: SAME STANDARD BY ANYONE, ANYWHERE, BY ANY CONTACT METHOD

Action 2.6.1 Be consistent by offering one pathway (e.g. one phone number) and a consistent level of service regardless of the choice of contact method.

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 service review initiative will develop base line cost of each of the services that the Wingecarribee Shire Council 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 contact method 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	Standardise and 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 will be 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, with the active involvement and contribution of relevant teams.
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 model processes and innovative training to equip staff with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to interact with customers in a range of situations.
Action 4.2.2	Review the customer service component of Council's staff induction program to re-invigorate the customer service culture.
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 through its Customer Service Charter 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 charter to ensure it achieves 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 proactive 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'.