



Attachment 2

to

Item 4.2.1

Draft Customer Service Experience Policy

Date of meeting: 9 May 2023
Location: Council Chambers
Time: 6:30pm



Customer Service Experience

DRAFT COUNCIL POLICY

Division:	General Manager	Policy Number:	3958068
Branch:	Business Transformation and Customer Experience	Adopted Date:	
Responsible Officer:	Manager Business Transformation and Customer Experience	Next Review Date:	
Director:	General Manager	Version:	2



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Hawkesbury City Council (Council) provides a wide range of facilities, infrastructure and services to the community.

We strive for excellence, continuous improvement and best practise across all customer contact points. We are committed to delivering a quality customer service experience that is consistent, accurate, efficient, effective, solutions-focused, responsive and delivered in ways that are professional, respectful, inclusive and uphold the rights of all customers. We actively encourage feedback about our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff from our customers. We are committed to using this information to improve our service for the benefit of all customers, as well as adapt to the changing needs and expectations of our customers.

Our commitment is reflected in our Community Strategic Plan and our Organisational Values. This Policy outlines the principles that drive, inform and direct staff on how to interact and connect with customers ensuring they effectively contribute to a quality customer service experience and are delivered within minimum standards. This Policy and the Customer Service Experience Charter will assist Council to meet its statutory obligations as defined by State legislation.

1.2 Statement

Section 270 of the Local Government Act 1993 requires Council to establish policies and procedures to respond to reasonable requests for the provision of a service by the Council or the improvement of a service provided by the Council and to deal with complaints about the actions of the Council, staff and/or other persons acting on behalf of the Council.

Council recognises the equal importance of internal and external customers, and that the way in which staff interacts with customers impacts significantly on the customers' perception of Council. Providing a positive customer service experience for our customers supports the effectiveness and value of our organisation.

This Policy reflects legislative and regulatory guidelines, ensuring Council has an approach to delivering quality customer service and experience that is equitable for all customers.

1.3 Definitions

The definitions of certain terms are:

Complaint	Is defined as expression of dissatisfaction with our services, staff or procedures.
Compliments	Is defined as an expression of when we have met or exceeded the needs or expectations of the customer.
Corporate Channel Standards	Is defined as a set of steps to ensure requests are handled efficiently and effectively, set expectations on the amount of time it is reasonable to expect Council will take to respond, resolve an enquiry or deliver a service and keeps the customer in the loop until it's complete. Standards also indicate how Council wants customers to feel about their experience with Council.
Council	Hawkesbury City Council
Customer	Is defined as an individual or business (internal or external) who accesses, receives, or benefits from facilities, goods and/or services and interacts with or within Council to request information, services or actions from officers.
Customer Request	Is defined as a request for a service or action by a customer. Customer requests will be recorded in Council's Corporate Application.
Customer Service	Is defined as the transactional component, or what is required to fulfill a task or query on behalf of a customer.
Customer Experience	Is defined as the emotional aspect of the service delivery. The perception or feeling a customer has during and after they access one of the Council's services, interact with our staff, visit our facilities or use one of our systems.



Customer Service Experience	The concept of looking at both the customer service and customer experience as a whole responsibility in the way in which the Council communicates, interacts and connects with its customers. The fundamental principle being Council cannot be delivering to its community expectations if it isn't focused on delivering customer service and creating customer experiences; these go hand in hand.
General Feedback	Is defined as complimentary or constructive feedback about our program delivery, services, processes and performance.
Service Standards	Is defined as services that handle technical, complex, time-consuming or high-risk services or tasks such as Development Applications. The standards set the expectations for the customer on the amount of time it is reasonable to expect Council will take to respond, resolve an enquiry or deliver a service.

1.4 Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff and persons carrying out work on behalf of the Council, for example contractors, consultants, workplace students and volunteers.

Council staff are responsible and accountable for delivering and creating a quality customer service experience in line with this Policy, the Customer Service Experience Charter and in conjunction with any other related Policy or Council directive.

In addition, the Mayor and Councillors play a role in referring requests for services, handling sensitive or escalated requests back to Council for appropriate action and identifying any policy or strategy changes.

1.5 Objectives

The overall aim of this Policy is:

1. Ensure Councillors, Council staff and persons carrying out work on behalf of the Council are delivering a customer service experience in line with best practice expectations as set out in this Policy, Customer Service Experience Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct.
2. Develop a 'customer first' culture throughout the organisation by providing staff with the support and tools they need to deliver a positive customer service experience including training, education and access to the appropriate systems, processes, technologies and strategies.
3. Ensure our customers are our priority and work towards resolving requests or provide information at first point of contact wherever possible through accurate, consistent and timely responses in all customer interactions.
4. Create a working environment where Council delivers a quality customer service experience that is consistent, accurate, efficient, effective, solutions-focused, responsive, delivered in ways that are professional, respectful and uphold the rights of all customers.
5. Ensure we continuously listen to our customers feedback (including suggestions, compliments and complaints) about our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff and Councillors, and use this information to improve or enhance our responsiveness and overall approach to our service delivery in line with best practices.
6. We value our customers' time and are committed to offering a choice on how to interact with us and staying abreast of technological advancements that advocate for the customer and facilitate a quality and/or positive experience.
7. Improve customer responsiveness aligned to measurable customer service experience corporate channel and service standards which guide staff in their interactions with customers.
8. Recognise customer service experiences as everyone's responsibility at Council, underpinning the way customer interactions are supported by our different departments and teams across Council.



The Mayor and Councillors play a role in referring requests for services, handling sensitive or escalated requests back to Council for appropriate action and identifying any policy or strategy changes.

2. PRINCIPALS

2.1 General Principles

1. Council's customer service experience mission is *'our customers and working well together is at the heart of everything we do'*.
2. Council's customer service experience vision is we strive for excellence, continuous improvement and best practice across all customer contact points, and we deliver a quality customer service experience that is consistent, accurate, efficient and effective, solutions-focused, responsive, inclusive and delivered in ways that are professional, respectful, inclusive and uphold the rights of all customers.
3. Council defines customer service as the transactional component (or what is required to fulfill a task or query on behalf of a customer), and customer experience as the emotional aspect of the service delivery (or the perception or feeling a customer has during and after they access one of Council's services, interact with our staff, visit our facilities or use one of our systems). Although distinct, Council views them as one core responsibility known as delivering a 'customer service experience'.
4. Council promotes customer service experience as a whole of Council responsibility, with everyone in scope of this policy responsible and accountable for delivering and creating a quality customer service experience which are delivered within minimum corporate channel and service standards. The Mayor and Councillors play a role in referring requests for services, and handling sensitive or escalated requests back to Council for appropriate action and identifying any policy or strategy changes.
5. Council encourages general feedback about our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff to monitor and improve our service for the benefit of all customers, as well as adapt to the changing needs and expectations of our customers. Council regularly elicits feedback through community consultations, public exhibitions, and surveys (refer to the separate policy on Customer Feedback for more information). In addition, Council will also seek your feedback periodically and you could also be asked for feedback at the point of interacting with our services.
6. Council recognises the importance of complaints and regards them as opportunities to improve our processes, delivery of services and conduct of staff. Council makes decisions that are consistent, fair and in line with Council policies and relevant legislation that may result in decisions you may disagree with. When providing the outcomes, we seek to do this in an empathetic way and understanding of your circumstances.

While most problems can be resolved quickly, there are times when a detailed investigation is required. We will keep you informed of the progress if this is the case.

If customers are unsatisfied, we encourage customers to ask for a review of our handling of the matter. The review process will determine if we acted according to our policies and guidelines (refer to the separate policy on Customer Feedback for more information).

7. Council also recognises the importance of compliments and regards them as opportunities to identify when we have met or exceeded customer need and/or expectations (refer to the separate policy on Customer Feedback for more information).
8. Council has a Customer Service Experience Charter which will drive, inform and direct staff on how to interact and connect with customers at Council (refer to the separate Customer Service Experience Charter for more information).



Customer Service Experience Policy

9. Customer service experience corporate channel and service standards have also been established as a set of expectations on the amount of time the Council will take to respond and/or resolve an enquiry or deliver a service. Standards also address how Council wants customers to feel about their experience with us (refer to the separate Customer Service Experience Charter for more information).
10. Customer Service Experience corporate channel and service standards do not apply during the festive season office closure, public holidays or periods of emergency or natural disaster – there needs to be flexibility to ensure expectations are appropriately managed. Normal periods of operation refer to times when Council operations are not impacted by a disaster or emergency that affects their capabilities to deliver services as expected.
11. Council has adopted a Statement of Business Ethics which requires staff to conduct the Council's business activities in accordance with the Code of Conduct and to observe the highest standards of probity, ethical behaviour and integrity in their business dealings. The Code of Conduct holds Council staff accountable for their actions and requires them to act honestly, legally and ethically when dealing with the community and others; to avoid conflicts of interest, both real and perceived; and to act with due care and diligence and in the public interest.
12. Council recognises that customers have the right to expect an acceptable level of service. The Council values the mutual benefits of a good customer service experience but believes that within this experience there is a clear line between customer rights and staff (Council) responsibilities. Customers should be mindful of the need to balance their rights with the rights of staff to safety and respect, and the rights of other customers to equal time and resources (refer to the separate policy on Customer Feedback for more information).

3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Policy Responsibilities

Role	Key Responsibilities
Mayor and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for adhering to this Policy • Refer requests for services, and handling sensitive or escalated requests back to Council for appropriate action • Input into the proposed strategies and policies in relation to customer service experience
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for adhering to this Policy • Ensure staff awareness and compliance with the Policy • Responsible for the final approval of this Policy • Regularly review reports on arising trends, issues and support recommendations for improvement • Ensure integrity of reports • Develop a culture of customer focus and continuous improvement by taking on customer feedback and integrating it into Operational Plan actions to be undertaken within their division • Encourage staff to make recommendations for improvements
Senior Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for adhering to this Policy • Ensure staff awareness and compliance with the Policy • Ensure employees receive training on this Policy • Ensure that staff are delivering customer service experiences in line with this policy, Customer Service Experience Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct • Assist and support staff to resolve requests or provide information at first contact • Develop a culture of customer focus and continuous improvement by taking on customer feedback and integrating it into Operational Plan actions to be undertaken within their department.



Role	Key Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise staff who deliver exceptional Customer Service Experience Lead, monitor and mentor staff to resolve requests within Corporate Channel and Service Standards Ensure team related processes, guidelines and directives are in line with this policy, Customer Service Experience Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for adhering to this Policy Deliver a quality customer service experience in line with this policy, Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct Attempt to resolve requests or provide information at first contact Lodge requests, notes on interactions and all associated communication documents in our corporate systems. If it's existing, look up the original request and add interaction notes Attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they escalate to a formal complaint in line with Customer Feedback Policy Escalate any concerns or issues in meeting Corporate Channel or Service Standards with your direct supervisor Regularly review their service content on centralised knowledge management systems (including information, processes, guidelines, procedures etc) to support the Call Centre resolving request or provide information at first point of contact. Support customers and staff to self-service by retrieving, distributing and sharing knowledge.
Business Transformation and Customer Experience Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the development and review of this policy in line with Customer Service Experience Charter, Values and Code of Conduct Embed a customer first culture throughout the organization by providing staff with support and the tools they need to deliver a positive customer service including training, education and access to appropriate systems, processes, technologies and strategies Provide regular reports to Senior Leadership and Executive Leadership teams Ensure integrity of reports Assist and support Council employees in relation to administering the Policy Investigate non-compliance in-line with this Policy, Customer Service Experience, Values and Code of Conduct Carrying out periodic community surveys to assess how the local community thinks about where Council is performing well and areas where Council needs to improve service.
Frontline Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the coordination of customer feedback in line with Council's Customer Feedback Policy.
Records Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the coordination of customer feedback in line with Council's Customer Feedback Policy.

3.2 Breaches of this Policy

Any breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Performance Counselling (Disciplinary) Corporate Policy.



4. DOCUMENT CONTROL

4.1 Review

This Policy is reviewed at least every four years or when relevant legislation changes.

4.2 Related Documents

- Hawkesbury City Council - Code of Conduct
- Hawkesbury City Council - Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct
- Hawkesbury City Council - Statement of Business Ethics
- Hawkesbury City Council - Customer Feedback Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council - Customer Service Experience Charter
- Hawkesbury City Council - Community Engagement Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council - Workplace Surveillance Corporate Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council - Performance Counselling (Disciplinary) Corporate Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council - Privacy Management Plan

4.3 Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines:

- [NSW Local Government Act](#)
- [NSW State Records Act](#)
- [NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act](#)
- [NSW Government Information \(Public Access\) Act](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Good Conduct and Administrative Practice – Guidelines for state and local Guidelines](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Enforcement Guidelines for Councils](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Unreasonable conduct by Complainant Model policy](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Unreasonable conduct by a Complainant](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Effective complaint handling guidelines](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Complaint management framework and model policy](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman Apologises – A practical guide](#)