



CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

2024

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“ Providing excellent customer service underpins over 100 different services we provide to our community, requiring a whole of organisation approach. ”

The logo for Sorell Council is positioned vertically on the left side of the page. It features the words 'SORELL' and 'COUNCIL' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white with a dark grey shadow, giving them a 3D appearance. They are set against a background of horizontal wavy bands in shades of brown, tan, and white.

Overview

The Customer Service Strategy is Sorell Council's commitment to delivering excellent customer service.

The Strategy lets our customers know how we will work to deliver and improve the experience of services provided to our residents, businesses and community.

We deliver a range of services which are guided by the day-to-day needs of our community.

We aim to provide our customers with the best possible experience when using our services, looking for information about our services and in their dealings with us.

We are focused on making it simple for our customers to interact with us. We are committed to being able to help, and ensure that the customer is kept informed through proactive communication.

We understand customer trends and customer expectations are always changing. We want to ensure we continue to keep up with new technology and recognise the role that technology plays in the delivery of customer service and meeting the expectations of the customer.

Customers interact with us in many ways: from traditional channels (phone calls, emails, face to face) and online channels (online forms/requests, website and social media).

Each time a customer uses one of our services or interacts with us, it shapes their experience. A customer's experience with us starts well before making contact and a customer may have more than one point of contact which can happen across multiple 'service channels' such as online, phone or front counter, and with more than one person in the organisation.



Introduction

This strategy outlines the key principles, goals and strategies for improved customer service standards at Sorell Council.

It will align with the statements made in our revised Customer Service Charter and will support the improvement of our customer service outcomes across the whole organisation. It will also enable us to deliver better community engagement and continuously improve our whole service delivery.

Excellent customer service underpins approximately 100 different services we provide to our community, requiring a whole of organisation approach. This strategy details how we will embed a culture of strong customer service, where each member of staff demonstrates personal leadership when assisting our community, reflecting a genuine 'can-do' attitude.

The Customer Service Strategy builds upon what we achieved in our Customer Service Strategy 2020 and promotes a proactive, innovative and flexible approach to service delivery which is important in meeting increasing growth and change in our community.

As an organisation, we look forward to seeing the progress of this Strategy and continuing to deliver the best possible outcomes for our community as a whole

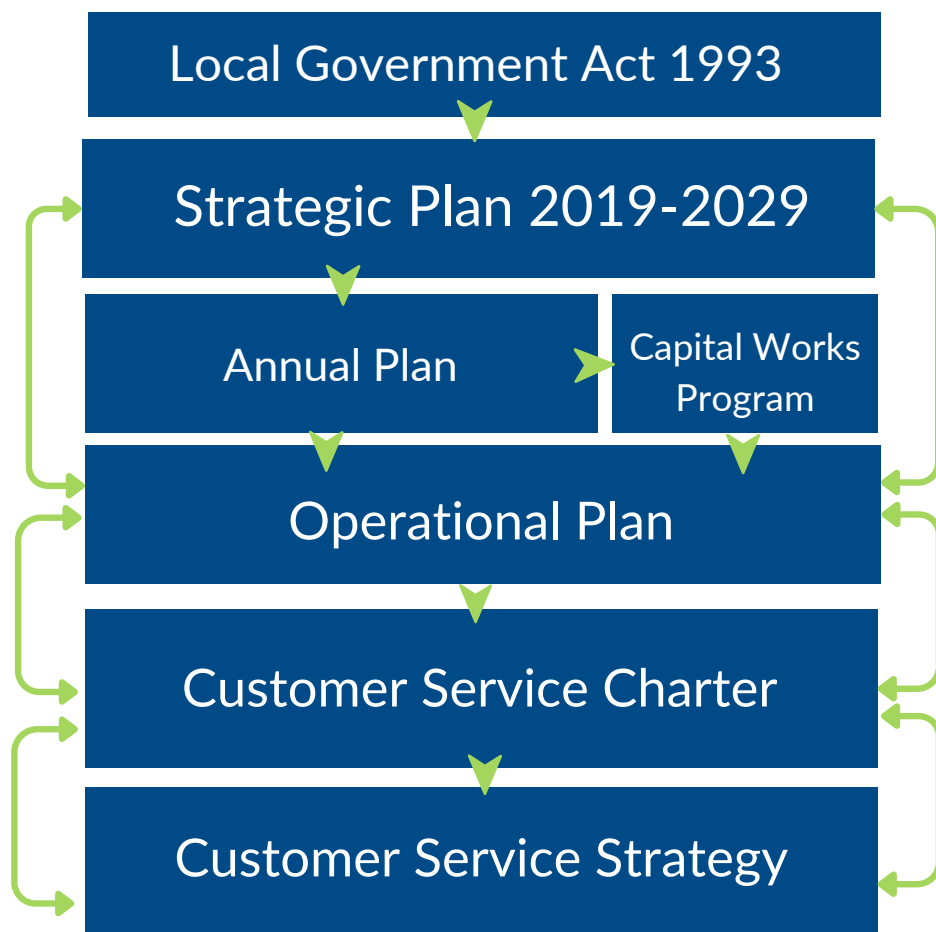
Positioning the Customer Service Strategy

The legislation forming the powers and functions of Councils is The Local Government Act 1993 (The Act). The Act specifies that Councils must develop a Strategic Plan and a Customer Service Charter.

Our Strategic Plan 2019 – 2029 describes how we will progress towards the longer term needs of our community and influences our operations, including the way we deliver our services, how we engage with our community and how we govern the organisation.

The Customer Service Charter details the principles relating to services provided by us and the procedures for dealing with complaints relating to services provided by us.

Our Customer Service Strategy outlines the way we will support the delivery of the Strategic Plan and supports the standards set out in the Customer Service Charter.



Our Customers

OUR POPULATION

16,734

Increased by 14.89% since 2016



FAMILIES

4,707

Increased by 20.1%



LOCAL BUSINESS

1,021

Increased by 20.1 %



SERVICES PROVIDED BY COUNCIL

100

From road maintenance, waste service, animal management and recreation facilities



We use the word “customer” to describe the diverse range of individuals and organisations who receive services from us, or interact with us.

Our “customers” include:

- Residents and rate payers;
- Local and national businesses;
- Community groups;
- Visitors and tourists;
- Councillors;
- Agencies such as Federal and State Government Departments and not-for-profit groups; and
- Regulator and Peak bodies such as auditors, Local Government Association (LGAT), TasWater, TasWaste South etc.

We recognise that whilst not all of our customers directly contact Council, they do still rely on us to provide direction to help our community and deliver essential services.

We also recognise that as an organisation providing and delivering a diverse range of services, we often interact as customers ourselves internally. It is important that we do this well in order to best deliver services to our external customers.

While various workgroup across Council deliver a range of services, everyone employed is working to serve our community. Delivering this strategy is therefore the responsibility of all employees – not just our customer facing teams.



OUR DATA



24,052

Calls answered by Council's
Customer Service Team



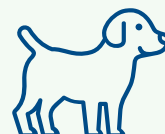
372

New homes approved &
New lots created



94%

Enquiries resolved at first
point resolution by Council's
Customer Service Team



3,157

Dogs registered



14,392 Green Waste Collections
6,790 Hard Waste Collections



4,717

Payments taken over the
counter by Council's
Customer Service Team

Data captured from:
2023-2024 Financial Year Council Data

Our Commitment

OUR VALUES

Underpinning this strategy is Council's commitment to our values for delivering excellent customer service and first point resolution.

INTEGRITY

We work in good faith, are honest and forthcoming and take accountability for our decisions.

UNITY

We work cohesively as one Council, supporting our community and each other to achieve better outcomes.

RESPECT

We listen to and consider the opinions and input of each person and acknowledge each other's contribution.

INNOVATION

We are committed to finding new solutions, adapting to change and continuously improving in order to deliver the best outcomes for the community.

Customer Service Charter

Our Commitment to You

At Sorell Council, we are committed to working in partnership with our community to consistently deliver programs and services that are within our capacity and resources, with a focus on exceptional customer service.

Our staff are committed to ensuring that our organisation's values of integrity, unity, respect and innovation are reflected in their actions, whether dealing directly with our customers, or working together to deliver programs and services to our community.

When dealing with Council you can expect us to:

- Greet you with a smile.
- Communicate clearly and listen carefully.
- Make things as simple as possible for you.
- Provide accurate, prompt, friendly, courteous and professional customer service.
- Give you choices about how and when you contact us.
- Actively seek your feedback on our service to ensure they meet your needs.
- Provide an after-hours service response for emergency incidents.
- Acknowledge all written correspondence and promptly provide a response.
- Provide first point resolution wherever possible.
- We will protect your privacy and personal information.

You can help us by:

- Treating our staff with mutual respect.
- Showing respect and courtesy to other customers and Council staff.
- Being complete and accurate in your dealings with us.
- Working with us to resolve issues, as the use of aggressive and abusive language and behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Making an appointment in advance if you have a complex issue.
- Providing your name and contact details.

Personal Information

Respecting our customers' privacy is important to us and all personal and confidential information is handled in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*. Confidential information will only be accessed for authorised work-related tasks.

Providing us with feedback

We encourage you to contact us directly regarding your service experiences.

You can contact us in person, by email or via phone:

Email	sorell.council@sorell.tas.gov.au
Website	www.sorell.tas.gov.au
Mail	PO Box 126, SORELL TAS 7172
In person	47 Cole Street, Sorell
Phone	(03) 6269 0000 (Weekdays from 8.00am to 4.30pm, excluding public holidays)

Guiding Principles

We are committed to providing our community with high quality customer service in line with our Customer Service Charter. These guiding principles, together with our values, guide the delivery of excellent customer service across the organisation:

Being responsive to our customer's needs

ONE

Encourage and empower staff to take ownership and deliver positive outcomes

TWO

Being courteous, respectful and transparent in all interactions

THREE

Focusing on 'First Point Resolution' wherever possible

FOUR

Recognising and respecting our customer's diverse requirements

FIVE

Welcoming customer feedback as an opportunity to continually improve our service

SIX

Our Goals

Each of our Goals has listed objectives, strategies, and a series of suggestions for improvement that will support staff and the organisation in achieving these goals. Having an action/implementation plan will keep us focused as we strive for customer service excellence.

1

COMMUNICATION

Connect with our customers

2

CUSTOMER FOCUSED APPROACH

Know and support our customers on their customer journey

3

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOCUS

System and process improvement, driven by Customer and Business needs

GOAL 1

COMMUNICATION: Connect with Our Customers

Objectives for Goal 1:

- Ensure understanding and courtesy in all interactions and communications (internal and external).
- Ensure communication to our customers, is clear, meaningful and is accessible through multiple channels.
- Provide opportunity for customers to engage with us on matters that are important to them.
- Promote a greater understanding of what Council does, our areas of responsibility, and time-frames for response or action.

Strategies:

1. Promote a plain language culture across the Organisation.
2. Promote our activities and inform our community about our business and responsibilities through our newsletters, our Website and Social Media channels.
3. Foster a communication approach across the organisation that results in effective expectation management.
4. Promote a clear and consistent customer service approach across Council.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. **SORELL** mnemonic

Create an internal campaign which promotes consistent and effective communication for each customer interaction using a simple mnemonic eg.

- S** Speak clearly and without judgement
- O** Orchestrate two-way conversation
- R** Relay information, questions or complaint back to customer to demonstrate understanding of query
- E** End with a solution or next step and a timeframe
- L** Listen actively to capture all issues or concerns
- L** Liaise with appropriate technical staff to provide outcomes or solution inline with response times within the Customer Service Charter

2. Improving the Connection

- Review standard written communication and information sheets across Council to ensure plain language and consistent messaging is used.
- Ensure time-frames are included in written communication and information sheets to assist with setting the correct expectations.
- Introduce regular reviews of our documentation/communication from across the organisation during team meetings to identify opportunities for improving the level of plain language used.
- Review all communication platforms to identify opportunities to simplify the message.
- Educate Councillors on their obligations under the Customer Service Charter.
- Provision of templates for to assist with consistent responses to customers.

GOAL **2** **CUSTOMER FOCUSED APPROACH:** **Know & Support Our Customers on their Customer Journey**

Objectives for Goal 2:

- Empower our customers in navigating their Customer Journey.
- Empower staff, through increased understanding of the customer journeys through the business, to deliver excellent customer service.
- Continually evolve Council's service delivery to meet the changing needs of our customers.

Strategies:

1. Foster a customer focused, first point resolution approach
2. Embrace process mapping across the organisation for both internal and external customers
3. Review our complaints handling procedure, and include process mapping as part of that procedure.
4. Provide additional support for customers with complex complaints and increase customer touchpoints where required

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. First Point Resolution Focus

- Maintain Councils "knowledge base" system for customer service that captures whole of organisation key information and current projects.
- Support first point resolution through extensive training of front line staff, developing a culture of anticipating the customer's needs and providing appropriate information sheets and customer support materials and/or forms so that customers can "come prepared"
- Internal promotion of the Customer Service Strategy, Charter and the Customer Service Framework

2. Improving Internal Customer Service

- Map internal journeys and identify pain points for staff, providing opportunities to resolve issues (especially on regular departmental processes) and raise awareness of organisational impacts of poor quality customer service.
- Introduce information through team meetings around effective communications, as well as organisational expectations on supporting other teams, to assist staff in prioritisation and improve awareness of organisational impacts.
- Create internal customer service standards 'what are our expectations' and identify any trigger points for reviewing.

GOAL 3

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOCUS:

System and Process Improvement, driven by Customer and Organisational Needs

Objectives for Goal 3:

- Increase the ease of doing business with Council and improve 'customer convenience'
- Regularly seek feedback to ensure we continue to meet expectations.
- Provide continuous improvement through monitoring Council's ongoing performance, opportunities for excellence and to streamline and improve service delivery

Strategies:

1. Investigate and implement new technologies to enhance the customer experience, improve accessibility, and/or improve internal processes and reporting.
2. Proactively seek feedback and utilise ongoing Customer Satisfaction Survey of Customers and benchmarking report to monitor Council's performance.
3. Focus on developing new mechanisms for measuring effectiveness of the Organisation's customer service.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Digital Platforms

- Review Council's regulatory systems, identify pain points and investigate new systems to enhance better organisational wide productivity.
- Ensure metadata, with plain language is developed on all website pages to maximise searching capabilities
- Review website content regularly to ensure information is current and correct

- Provide a link to the customer service survey in emails and in the footer of the website improving its accessibility
- Investigate providing information to customers lodging requests via the website that assist with educating customers of time lines for CRM triaging and processing
- Research the advantages of chatbot functions on Councils Website and how this can enhance our customer experience.

Evaluation

How Will We Evaluate The Strategy

The Strategy will be reviewed annually and formally revised within twelve months of a new Council being elected. This will ensure that current issues, customer feedback and any new and emerging customer service trends can be captured and reflected in the Strategy.

The objectives outlined in The Strategy will be built into the key performance indicators of relevant Council staff. The Manager Community Relations will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the Customer Service Strategy, in order to ensure the timely delivery of service standards articulated in the Customer Service Charter.

Related Policies and Documentation

The Customer Service Strategy was developed in consultation with staff, Councillors and The Leadership Team. It is linked to Council's:

- Strategic Plan.
- Communications and Engagement Strategy.
- Customer Service Charter.

This strategy applies to:

- All of Council's permanent full time, part time, and casual employees;
- Contract staff;
- Consultants; and
- Partner organisations who have been engaged to deliver services on behalf of Council.