

TOWN OF GAWLER

Customer Service Strategy 2020



Gawler



Customer Service

Customer Service Strategy

VISION

To achieve customer service excellence, and to improve our Customer's Journey throughout our organisation.

MISSION

To foster a 'Customer Focused' culture and empower our staff to deliver high quality customer service by:

- Ensuring Customer Service is everyone's priority
- Investing in appropriate training, development of intellectual property and systems as required
- Creating an emphasis on continuous improvement through appropriate methods of performance measurement, process review and reporting

ABOUT THIS CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

This strategy has been triggered by a focus on continuous improvement of the services we provide and seeking to improve the customer experience where possible.

The Customer Service Strategy has been developed in line with the Gawler Community Plan which identifies under Goal 5 – A Strong, Vibrant Community - the intention to be recognised as a 'best practice' local government organisation through a series of actions including:

- Providing professional services with a passion to do our very best and proactively achieve the goals envisioned by our community
- Providing a quality customer service experience using innovative and appropriate technology

This Strategy provides a strategic focus for Council and is supported by a framework of internal and public documents, including a revised Customer Service Charter.

RESEARCHING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

An Internal Working Group has been driving the development of this Strategy. Significant research was undertaken to identify what business and other local government organisations have been doing to improve their services and what is best practice around the world.

Community and stakeholder consultation has been undertaken to inform this Strategy.

It is encouraging that 74% of people responding to the Customer Service Satisfaction Survey were satisfied with Council's level of Customer Service. Stakeholder interviews reported an even higher overall satisfaction level with 86% of respondents being either satisfied or very satisfied. Targeted stakeholder consultation involved creating a list of 44 various stakeholders (including contractors and) suppliers. 24 stakeholders elected to participate, with 20 taking part in interviews conducted by staff, and another 4 completing an online survey by themselves. The responses received through the external consultation supported the Administration's view that primarily Council is providing customer service of a high standard.

However, the results show that a small percentage of our customers reported experiencing unsatisfactory customer service. A number of these experiences related to the customer's expectations around time-frames for either a response or an action not being met. This highlights the need to communicate expected time-frames with customers when they interact with Council. Other customers identified their frustration with 'unresolved issues', Council's process or with resourcing levels for some services. The survey results also indicated that our customers' preferred methods of contact with Council are face to face, phone and email. However, customers prefer Council to communicate with them about our events and activities via social media and Council's website.

Some suggestions for improvement provided through the consultation process were:

- Improved signage at the Civic Centre
- Improved digital presence – website
- Mediation services

This valuable feedback provides Council with an opportunity to develop strategies and actions for improvement.

There are a variety of reasons to strengthen the customer service we provide, including:

- Providing a greater return on investment on behalf of our community
- Increasing our customer satisfaction rating through an improved customer experience thereby reducing the number of complaints that require management
- Meeting changing public expectations and future needs of our community
- Improving accessibility through improved communication methods
- Increasing front facing opportunities to transact and interact
- Reducing the resourcing required to manage customer enquiries

Staff have been able to engage with the consultation process through a staff questionnaire allowing them to feed into the strategy development on behalf of their Division. The questionnaire sought input on what staff believe their Division does well with regards to providing customer service. The responses received reflected the customer feedback received from the community, with many staff identifying that their teams and team members were:

- Polite
- Respectful
- Courteous
- Efficient
- Professional
- Empathetic

A significant number of responses provided further insight into the high level of satisfaction indicated by our customers in the survey results and also into the organisational culture around customer service, imparting observations from within their Division, such as:

- Encouraged to own each customer interaction
- Effectively solve problems within Council guidelines
- Ask relevant questions to ensure accurate reporting
- We understand our job role and parameters
- Honesty in dealing with customers
- Solutions focused

Staff were also asked to identify what they believed their Division could improve upon with regards to delivering customer service. The responses received were varied across the organisation, with responses such as:

- Technology – system integration
- Communication - across departments, information sheets, website and social media
- CRM's - tracking responses and time-frames, automatic update to customer or interim contact when CRM is allocated
- Provide more information initially
- Encourage greater customer feedback – including internal customer survey
- Provide further knowledge for staff eg. knowledge base, information sheets, opportunity to learn about other departments
- Promotion of what Council does to both internal and external customers

46 staff from across the Organisation also participated in Customer Journey Mapping Workshops. During a two hour workshop staff were able to learn about customer expectations, how to map the customer's journey and the importance of walking a mile in our customer's shoes.

The workshop grouped teams together to map different journeys our customer's take when interacting with us, encouraged them to identify the pain points (bottlenecks), lack of information, omission of an important customer touchpoint (contact point) and identify opportunities to improve the journey.

The workshops were well received and highly successful. Staff actively identified solutions to pain points, opportunities to value add and were able to see the value of mapping a customer journey especially when it crossed between departments. Some staff were able to return to their Division and implement their learnings the same day.

The Customer Journey Mapping Tool created for the sessions is an important tool for our teams to use in the future, especially when reviewing complaints. An example of the Customer Journey Mapping Tool has been attached as an appendix (**Appendix A**).

This Strategy is not only about serving our community during our direct interactions with them, it is focused on improving how Council conducts its business by:

- Improving systems and processes
- Streamlining our business practices where possible
- Implementing strategies to improve customer service to internal customers as well as external
- Consulting regularly with our Customers to measure our performance
- Monitoring effectiveness through regular internal reporting.

WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS WANT

COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Timely› Responsive› Accurate› Plain language› Consultation on matters that affect them› Regular updates
TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Deliver on our promises› Act with integrity and impartiality› Information provided is accurate› That we will advocate for them› Help them make connections› Help them navigate local government
EMPATHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Understanding› Solutions focus› Inclusion and Accessibility› Assistance
SERVICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">› Empowered staff› Ease of doing business› Minimum of red tape

OUR COMMITMENT – CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

In Council's Customer Service Charter, available on Council's website and from any of our Customer Service locations, Council commits to:

- Being responsive to our customer's needs
- Clear, concise, plain language communication - regularly update our customer on matters that take time to resolve
- Empowered staff who take ownership, find solutions and deliver positive outcomes
- First Contact Resolution' wherever possible
- Recognising and respecting the diverse requirements of our customers
- Consult with our customers on matters that will affect them
- Welcome our customers feedback as an opportunity to continually improve our service
- Being accountable for tasks and challenges, see them through to completion

Strategic Direction

This Strategy will support an ongoing, organisational-wide focus on improving the customer experience, clearly articulating to all Council representatives that Customer Service is everyone's responsibility. The Goals and Actions identified, as they are delivered, will provide evidence that the effectiveness of our Customer Service impacts every Division within the Organisation and everyone benefits from striving for excellence in customer service.

This Strategy identifies three clear Goals that, along with Council's Organisational Values, the Customer Service Framework, and Guiding Principles, will maximise Council's potential to achieve Customer Service excellence.

Organisational Values

Our organisational values of Integrity, Inclusion, Happiness, Teamwork and Creativity provide the ideal culture within the organisation to consistently excel in the area of Customer Service.

Customer Service Framework

The Customer Service Framework supports Council's commitment to providing a fair and equitable service in accordance with legislation, regulations, policies and standards. A positive Customer Experience relies on organisation-wide teamwork to ensure Customer Service excellence.

The Customer Service Framework empowers staff to be able to respond appropriately when managing enquiries, requests for service, feedback, complaints and all other interactions with our community.

The external documents that create the framework are:

- Customer Service Strategy 2020
- Complaints Policy
- Complaints Resolution Policy
- Customer Service Charter

The following document will be drafted as part of the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan, and will become part of the Customer Service Framework:

- Customer Service Policy

The following internal documents and procedures will be reviewed and updated as part of the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan:

- Customer Service Standards
- Customer Feedback Opportunity and Process
- Service Level Agreements (i.e. time-frames for services)

Figure 1 below provides a representation of the reliance of the Customer Experience on the Customer Service Framework and how it overlaps with organisation wide teamwork.



Figure 1: The relationship between the Customer Experience and the Customer Service Framework.

Customer Service Guiding Principles

Council is 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:

1. Being responsive to the customer's needs
2. Encourage and empower staff to take ownership and deliver positive outcomes
3. Being courteous, respectful, equitable and transparent in all interactions
4. Focusing on 'First Contact Resolution' wherever possible
5. Recognising and respecting the customer's diverse requirements
6. Consulting with the community on matters that affect them
7. Welcoming customer feedback as an opportunity to continually improve our service



THE RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN TO DEVELOP THIS STRATEGY HAS IDENTIFIED THREE GOALS:



Each Goal has specified objectives, strategies, and a series of suggestions for improvement that will support staff and the organisation in developing the action/ implementation plan as we strive for customer service excellence.

The Internal Working Group, whilst developing this Strategy, took the approach that Council should not be held back on progressing positive outcomes in customer service until the strategy was completed. Therefore some key projects have been initiated/completed as the need was identified or there may have been previously identified opportunities already underway, such as:

- Council website redesign
- Gawler App development

The strategy still refers to the ongoing development and maintenance of these initiatives.

GOAL 1

COMMUNICATION: **Connect with Our Customers**

The source of success for Council is engagement with our Community and fostering good relationships built on mutual understanding. Connecting with our customers, understanding their needs and communicating clearly with them are important factors that will provide positive outcomes in customer service delivery.

Objectives for Goal 1:

- Ensure understanding and courtesy in all interactions and communications (internal and external)
- Ensure communication to our customers, is clear, meaningful, anticipates our customer's needs 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. Foster a plain language culture across the Organisation
2. Create a digital communication strategy (including Website, Social media and App) to promote Council activities and inform the Community about Council business and responsibilities
3. Foster a communication approach across the organisation that results in effective expectation management
4. Promote a clear, consistent customer service approach across Council

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. GAWLER mnemonic

- › Create an internal campaign which promotes consistent and effective communication for each customer interaction using a simple mnemonic eg.
 - » **G**reet the customer and introduce yourself
 - » **A**sk how can you be of assistance?
 - » **W**ork through the enquiry, asking questions to clarify the customer's needs
 - » **L**isten for any issues or concerns
 - » **E**nd with a solution or Next Step and a timeframe
 - » **R**eflect on how effective the interaction was, is there a learning for future interactions on this matter?

2. Digital communication strategy

- › Include campaign strategies, guidelines on the regularity of posting, target audience optimum scheduling times, management of cross promotions and notification parameters across all digital platforms, (website, App, social media)
- › Define appropriate business standards that represent high quality customer service within resourcing constraints, with a focus on social media
- › Define the appropriate methodology and platforms for communicating with Council's various customers in the digital space

3. Improving the Connection

- › Review standard written communication and information sheets across Council with a plain language, consistent messaging lens
- › Ensure time-frames are included in written communication and information sheets to assist with expectation management
- › Introduce regular reviews of 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

GOAL 2

CUSTOMER FOCUSED APPROACH: Know and 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 contact resolution approach
2. Embrace Customer Journey Mapping across the organisation for both internal and external customers
3. Review our complaints handling procedure, and embrace Customer Journey Mapping as part of that procedure.
4. Introduce mechanisms to support customers with complex complaints and increase customer touchpoints where appropriate

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. First Contact Resolution Focus

- › Develop a “knowledge base” for customer service that captures whole of organisation
- › Support first contact resolution through extensive training of front line staff, developing a culture of anticipating the customer’s needs and providing appropriate information sheets, customer support materials or forms so that customers can “come prepared”
- › Internal promotion of the Customer Service Strategy, charter and the CustomerService Framework

2. Customer Journey Mapping (External)

- › Enshrine Customer Journey Mapping in Council’s processes through:
 - » Providing staff training
 - » Making tool accessible
 - » Complaint resolution process
 - » Team activities at Team Meetings
 - » Use of Journey Maps during the induction of new staff
- › Map the Customer Journey for any complaints received and identify if there is an opportunity to remove pain points from the journey and increase touchpoints on extended or complex customer journeys and provide time-frames whenever possible
- › Map the Customer Journey when introducing a new product or service prior to its introduction in an effort to identify a quality customer experience from the outset

3. Improving Internal Customer Service

- › Use the Customer Journey Mapping tool to map internal journeys and define pain points for staff, identifying opportunities to resolve issues (especially on regular inter-departmental processes) and raise awareness of organisational impacts of poor quality journeys
- › Introduce information through team meetings regarding effective communications, as well as organisational expectations on supporting other teams, to assist staff in prioritisation and improve awareness of organisational impacts
- › Create accountability mechanisms to track quality of internal customer service and identify trigger points for reviewing resourcing, process or system issues

4. Customer Advocate program

- › Investigate a Customer Advocate Program to support the customer, particularly if a complaint crosses multiple departments, where the complainant is provided with a Customer Advocate from staff who becomes their 1 point of liaison with Council. The Advocate will organise and attend meetings, follow up enquiries, focus on the issue from the customer's point of view whilst helping the customer "navigate" Local Government. Once the matter is resolved the Customer Advocate will use the Customer Journey Mapping Tool to assess the customer's journey and identify opportunities for improvement.
- › Evaluate the possible introduction of mediation services, primarily regarding animal management issues.
- › Create accountability and transparency through creating a specific advocacy role that takes a central view of Customer Contact reporting, overseeing and following up on:
 - » Outstanding Customer Requests
 - » Overdue tasks
 - » Call back management / Closing the loop.

GOAL 3

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOCUS: System and Process Improvement, driven by Customer and Business Need

Objectives for Goal 3:

- Support staff with a robust framework, information and technological systems that assist them in delivering high quality customer service and meeting the customer's changing needs
- Increase the ease of doing business with Council and improve 'customer convenience'
- Foster ongoing meaningful engagement with customers and stakeholders
- Provide continuous improvement through monitoring Council's ongoing performance, opportunities for excellence and opportunities to streamline and improve service delivery

Strategies:

1. Embrace new technologies to enhance the customer experience, improve accessibility, and/or improve internal processes and reporting
2. Strive for system integration across the organisation wherever possible
3. Proactively seek feedback and utilise ongoing (biennial) Customer Satisfaction and Sentiment Surveys of Customers and Stakeholders to monitor Council's performance
4. Focus on developing relevant mechanisms for measuring effectiveness of the Organisation's customer service delivery

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Digital platforms

- › Develop meaningful reporting and data capture for all digital platforms
- › Develop guidelines on what data should be captured, how that data will be managed and protected, what the data can be used for and who can access or use the data

Website

- › Ensure metadata, with plain language or rookie terms, is developed on all website pages to maximise searching capabilities
- › Review website content in line with Goal 1 communication actions
- › Provide a link to the feedback form in the footer of the website improving its accessibility or create a feedback button in the header (in line with point 8.2 of Council's Complaints Policy – Policy will be made widely accessible to ensure that customers are fully aware of their right to complain)
- › Investigate providing information to customers lodging service requests via the website that assist with educating customers of real timelines for CRM triaging and processing

Social Media

- › Regularly confirm that our customers' preferred Social Media channels are being utilised
- › Establish Staff training needs with respect to Social Media
- › Identify opportunities for leveraging programs that support efficient methods of delivery across multiple social media platforms eg. Hootsuite
- › Identify meaningful metrics to report and measure performance for all platforms

Gawler App

- › Platform Ownership – ensure robust protection is in place with regards to Council's exposure to:
 - » Third party misdemeanour / misbehaviour via the Gawler App e.g. business not honouring discounts or breaching government regulations through false advertising
 - » Business association being claimed
 - » Type of business allowed to utilise the App

2. Customer Service Framework

- › New draft Customer Service internal HR Policy reviewed and adopted by the Administration.
- › Library and Customer Service Team review the Customer Service procedure and update as required to align with new systems
- › Program a biennial review of the Customer Service Framework
- › Review policies and procedures when new technology/software is introduced
- › Review business standards for customer journeys that receive negative feedback – eg. bonding process

3. CRM system Upgrade (planned for late 2020), will provide

- » automation for some aspects of CRM response to customer
- » more robust review and reporting processes.
- › Ensure during customisation of the CRM system that scripts for automated responses provide information on the processing of requests (including “triaging” of requests) and realistic time-frames for response
- › Ensure that target time-frames within the CRM system match the time-frames provided to the Customer through our Customer Service Charter, policies and communications
- › If contact has been requested, the CRM handling process needs to include an extra customer touchpoint (contact), at the time it is allocated to a staff member. Staff member to identify that the CRM has been received by a team member and to provide a time-frame in which the matter will be reviewed and a response or outcome can be provided to the customer. This should be a prompted action by the CRM system, a step in the process
- › Contact with customer to be through the preferred contact option requested by the customer
- › Introduce a periodic testing regime to be undertaken at the end of each reporting period, to ensure automated steps are operational on a regular basis
- › ACTUS to be fully integrated with New Authority CRM module and ACTUS training be provided to relevant staff
- › Customise reporting to provide Council with the relevant data to support accountability measures and our continuous improvement focus
- › Close the accountability loop, as per Goal 2(d) allocating a specific customer advocacy role that takes a central view of Customer Contact reporting, overseeing and following up on:
 - » Outstanding Customer requests
 - » Overdue tasks
 - » Call back management / Closing the loop

4. Customer Requests for Service that cannot be fulfilled

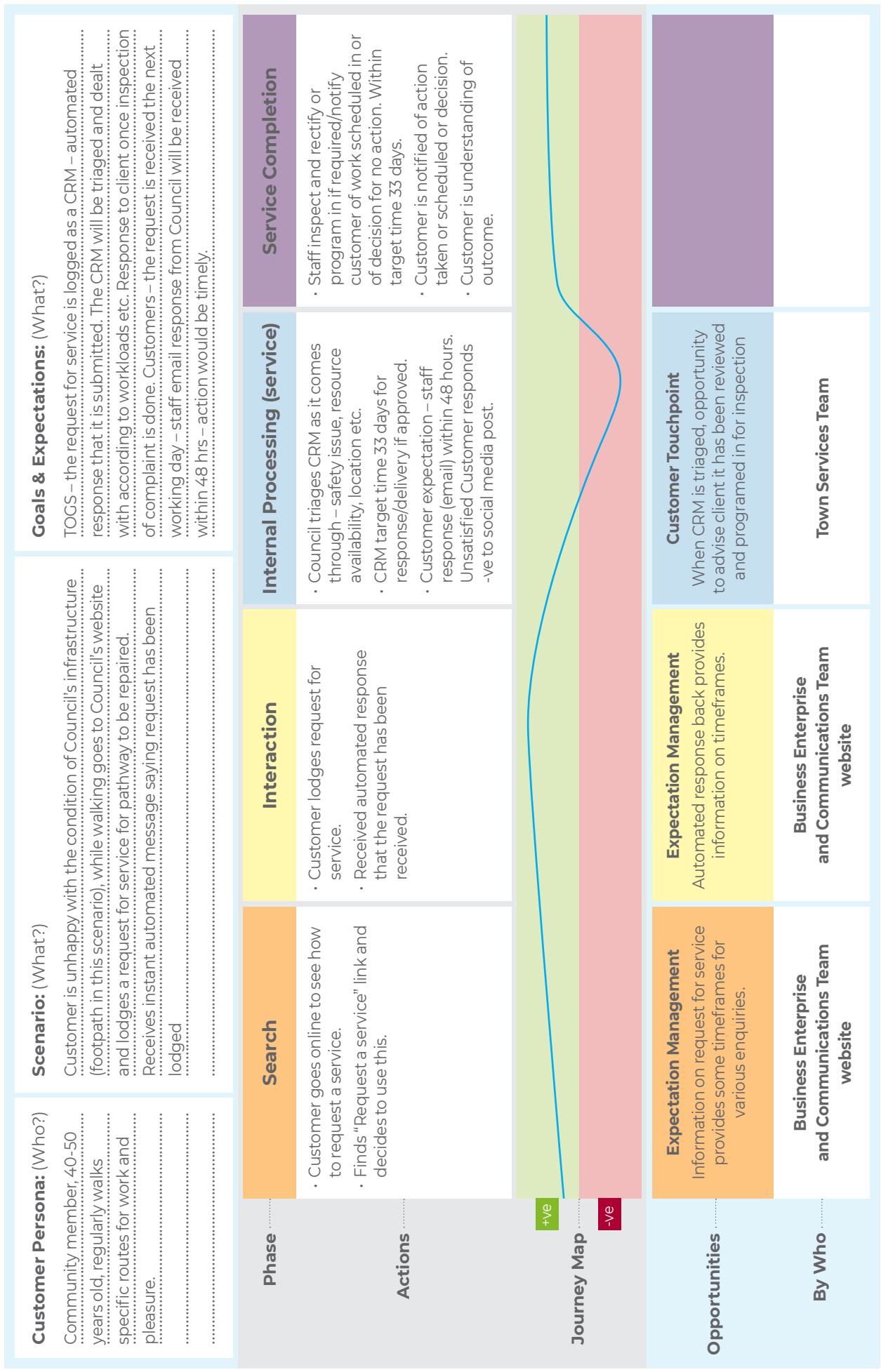
- › For Customer Requests cannot be fulfilled, investigate categorising them into two streams:
 - » Stream 1 – No further consideration required as the request is outside of Council's service levels or remit
 - » Stream 2 – Future consideration – possibly for future budget bid e.g. infrastructure renewals/ upgrades – resealing programs etc.

Items categorised under Stream 2 would be reviewed/considered by the Executive Management Team during Council's Annual Budget and Business Plan development cycle

Appendix A – Example of a blank Customer Journey Mapping Tool

<p>Customer Persona: (Who?)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>Scenario: (What?)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>Goals & Expectations: (What?)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		
<p>Phase</p>	<p>Search</p>	<p>Interaction</p>	<p>Internal Processing (service)</p>	<p>Service Completion</p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p>.....</p>			
<p>Journey Map</p>	<p>.....</p>			
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p>By Who</p>	<p>.....</p>			

Appendix B – Example of a completed Customer Journey Mapping Tool



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