

Customer Experience Strategy



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Introduction

West Lindsey District Council is committed to delivering the best outcomes for our customers living and working in West Lindsey.

Our values commit us to listening to and understanding what our customers need, enabling us to respond appropriately.

This strategy sets out our ambitions for delivery against this commitment and to provide the best possible experience for our customers, whoever they are and however they contact us.

Recent surveys carried out amongst our customers show that they value professionalism, politeness and helpfulness when they contact us. We have the foundations in place to support these needs and this strategy is about developing, further improving and preparing for future customer needs. We already provide a good service, but we now want to provide a better service.

The successful implementation of this strategy aligns with and is dependent on the Corporate Plan 2023-27 objectives, T24 (Together 24) service review recommendations, successful communications, business planning, staff coaching and mentoring and the Equality Strategy 2020-24.

What does Customer Experience mean?

Customer Experience is the customers perception of their interactions with us at every stage of the process from point of access to delivery of service and all the interactions in between.

We provide a wide range of quality services to our customers and we want this to be consistently good wherever and whenever they choose to access our services. It is important that our customers trust us to review and redesign services which respond to their needs and those of the local community whilst modernising to improve access and making it easy for our teams to deliver.



We will continue to provide a modern customer experience by putting customers at the centre, providing inclusive and consistently high levels of service, choice of how to access services and delivering convenience and value for money to all customers.

The services must maximise the use of all channels available to improve our hours of accessibility by promoting self-service for all transactions and making it easy to do business with the Council, whilst actively providing value for money and supporting those most vulnerable or in need of more traditional access to services.

We will achieve this by:



1. Putting our customer at the centre of everything we do by reflecting customer feedback in the design and delivery of services.

We will continue to ensure effective engagement with all our customers to help us fully understand their needs.

The data we gather will be used to design services with our staff, around the customers true needs, making it as easy as possible for our teams to deliver more positive outcomes.

2. Aiming to provide a consistent and high quality of service wherever and whenever our customers interact with us.

West Lindsey District Council provides 27 services to 95,200 residents and our customers have multiple means of contacting us.

Our customers need to be confident that they will receive an inclusive and consistent customer experience irrespective of how they contact us or how that service is delivered. It is vital that we not only deliver 'business as usual' in a more modern environment but we continue to enhance our services in line with the customer expectations.

We will continue to work with all our services across the Council to ensure this happens, including our Customer Services team.

3. Ensuring services are flexible and can adapt to the changing needs of our customers, now and in the future.

The Corporate Plan 2023-27 has identified that our population and its needs are constantly changing, the growth in technology means that our customers now expect a modern Council, offering a range of access options to quality services via digital means and our services will reflect that.

We also know that some of our customers may prefer the option to use more traditional methods of contacting us, such as by telephone and in person. To do this, services must maximise the use of all

channels available. It is essential that the Council improves its hours of accessibility by promoting self-service for all transactions. This will make it easy to do business with the Council whilst actively supporting those most vulnerable.

We will continue to be proactive in dealing with change, always looking forward and maximising impact on customers.

4. Developing a digital approach promoting and supporting self-help wherever possible, whilst retaining traditional access channels.

Digital technology has changed the way our customers interact socially and when shopping or requesting services. The Council needs to ensure that our services can meet our customers' expectations, are easy and convenient to use, are secure and available at 9am til 5pm Monday to Friday.

Customers will increasingly expect to access services through a wide range of options. We will consider the appropriate application of modern technologies to support all interactions. To modernise our services, it is vital to offer access to self-service and make this easy and consistently good in delivery. We will also maintain the option of face-to-face and telephone services for those most vulnerable, as well as supporting customers to self-serve and interact online 24/7.

We know that digital technology can help us to reduce costs, so we want to encourage self-help by those customers who can use this option. This will allow us to then focus resources on those more complex service requests and those customers that are less comfortable with using digital technology.

The WLDC Digital Vision will assist us in identify customer service solutions that address our ambitions and overcome barriers in delivery and demand. We will ensure that customers and our staff have input in the prioritisation and development roadmap and co-ordination across a range of digital tools to enable improved service delivery and access.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

The [Equality Strategy 2020/24](#) is to be reviewed in 2024 following community engagement. This will work collectively with the Customer Experience Strategy to deliver a seamless approach in how the Council operates and delivers services.

6. Co-designing service delivery with our customers, staff and partners, providing a unified and joined up customer experience.

Some of the services we provide are delivered in partnership and we know this can sometimes cause confusion for our customers. We will work with our partners to join-up services where that makes sense, support individuals and communities to help themselves by providing a supportive environment where residents can thrive independently, and engage with our customers regarding service standards.

7. Providing value for money.

We must balance the needs and aspirations of our individual customers with the needs of our wider population and our more vulnerable customers. We have limited funds available to us and that means we cannot always deliver everything to everyone. Where we cannot deliver a service, we will explain why and work to find an alternative option.

We will undertake in-depth reviews and redesigns of our services and the customers experience to improve the way we work, removing any part of the process which does not add value. We will utilise digital tools to help us in this change. Our ambition is to develop and enhance our customer services processes, and work with our people to continuously improve.

By investing in our staff and the tools we use to deliver our services, we will also become more productive. Gaining extra capacity give us choice. We can improve and become more consistent in our services standards, redirect resources to priority areas, provide service expertise and reduce operating costs, all in a managed way.

Our Performance

In recent customer surveys to over 1000 of our customers, we asked them to tell us how they contact the council, what their priorities are in relation to how we deal with enquiries and how they expect staff to behave.

Contacting Us:

- 32% said they would prefer to telephone us.
- 46% said they would prefer to use email.
- 15% said they would prefer to use our website.
- 7% said they would prefer an in-person experience.

Customer Priorities:

The data below in some cases adds up to more than 100% as customers told us they have differing needs and often more than one priority or experience depending on the nature of the enquiry at the time of making contact. This demonstrates that customers prefer choice in all areas when contacting the council.

- 59% said they found receiving the correct answer at the first point of contact is their priority.
- 23% said they wanted to be kept up to date on progress of their enquiry.
- 59% said they want to receive the full/correct answer on their first contact with the council.
- 19% said they want to know what to expect and when to expect it.

* Our customers

For the first time, the 2021 Census collected data relating to people's gender and sexual orientation. This data helps us to ensure that we are inclusive of all people in the district when designing our services now and for the future. As of 2021, 94.9% of adults living in West Lindsey identified as the gender they were registered with at birth and 0.3% identified as trans, non-binary or as a different but unspecified gender to that which they were assigned at birth. For a full breakdown of the gender and sexual orientation statistics, please refer to the Council's Annual State of the District Report.

Staff Behaviour:

We asked what their experience was in relation to staff behaviour when they last made contact with us. These figures are already high but we can see that by embedding improved customer experience across the council they could increase further. These figures add up to more than 100% as multiple responses were encouraged.

- 85% said they found our staff to be polite and understanding.
- 76% said they found our staff to be knowledgeable and professional.
- 70% said they found our staff to be empathetic and helpful.

The ability to have customer enquiries with the Council dealt with easily and effectively is an organisational priority. Getting it right first time is not only important to customers, but provides the opportunity for efficient service delivery.

Unfortunately, getting it wrong makes customers unhappy and impacts their satisfaction with the council and its services and consumes resources.

By taking a 'values based' approach, which includes the behaviours expected from our staff, we will ensure that our Customer Services Team have the right skills, knowledge and abilities to resolve customer enquiries at first point of contact.

We will do this by providing the right coaching, training and tools to create customer focused staff whose aim is to deal with enquiries professionally and as quickly as possible, with a right first time approach, resulting in a satisfactory outcome for all.

Understanding Our Area and Our People

For the purpose of this strategy, our "customers" are businesses, partners and anyone who lives, works and visits West Lindsey. It is important to understand and predict how our demographic changes will impact and subsequently inform the way we provide our services in the future.



By 2030, there will be
14,552
dependants aged 0-15
(down 5.8% from 2022)

We have an average of
2.3 million
visitors to West Lindsey
in a year



In total,
84.7%
of our population is in
paid employment

By 2030, there will be
3,866
over 85 year olds
(up 31.8% from 2022)

2.4%
of households don't
have English as their
first language

In total,
2.1%
of our residents are
unemployed

8.2%
of our residents
have a long-term health
condition or disability



By 2030, there will be
99,864
residents
(up 3% from 2022)

Two wards feature in top
10%
of England's most
deprived neighbourhoods

*As of 2021,
94.9%
of adults living in West
Lindsey identified as the
gender assigned with at
birth.

97%
of our residents
class themselves as
White British

There are
3790
active businesses in
West Lindsey

This information is sourced from the State of the District report and is accurate as of 13 May 2024.

West Lindsey is growing, our population is increasing and the council has high aspirations and expectations around the delivery of good quality services. There are also areas of deprivation within our communities where customers rely on the council to provide the support they need.

Customer of the Future

We need to consider our customer needs, expectations and priorities in the future, these changes will pose a number of specific challenges that will need to be collectively addressed if we are to ensure we can continue to deliver and improve a positive customer experience. We will need to consider:

- How we can quickly react and adapt to the fast pace of changing technologies in order to remain relevant and accessible.
- How to provide consistently good customer service across an increasingly diverse community whilst maintaining and improving the customer experience.
- A growing population increases demands for our services and we need to be prepared to manage that demand by exploring digital solutions.
- An ageing population with increasing dependency needs, may mean additional support to continue to live healthy, independent lives.
- We are seeing an increasing number of complex and cross cutting issues that individuals and communities need our help to address.
- Our customer facing staff will need to continue to move beyond being purely transactional, to supporting early intervention, prevention and help manage demand for the council.
- We will strive to offer customers a choice of contact methods to make our services accessible 24/7.
- There will be opportunities for the Council to better understand the health challenges faced by customers and this will enable us to consider deprivation and health and wellbeing, in order to deliver inclusive services.
- Our population will grow 3% by 2030 (equating to an additional 90,000 bins emptied annually) and digital contact is expected to grow by 4% annually or 28% by 2030 (UK Digital overview report 2022).



Our Services

These are the 2023/24 figures:

We have supported
39,060
residents on a
face-to-face basis at
the Council offices



We have processed
a total of
1,629
planning related
applications



We have processed
a total of
452,191
payments
during 2023/24



We have collected
bins from
45,640
properties (almost
3 million bins in total)

There have been over
64,000
digital forms
completed via
our website



We have been able
to assist over
6,000
households with their
benefit claims

We dealt with
100,210
customer contacts
via phone, email
and letters



Trinity Arts Centre sold
15,000
tickets to shows and
screenings

There has been
a total of
535,999
visitors to the
Council's website

We have collected
over
£68million
in Council Tax
during 2023/24

What do we want to achieve?

We want to be a council with a culture that focuses on the customer, working as one council offering a consistent quality of service. Our aim is to provide the following:

- Our Customer Experience Strategy is due to be agreed in Spring/Summer 2024 and our first year will be base-lining our current position across all services.
- We will provide tailored coaching and training for customer service staff, embedding the values within this strategy, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills and tools to deliver high quality service wherever and whenever customers contact us.
- Our written communications will be written in Plain English with alternatives formats available on request.
- Through understanding customer needs, customer experience will be improved and we will deal with enquiries at first point of contact, resulting in a quicker, more efficient and responsive service.
- We will create Customer Service Champions for all service areas - these are customer service staff who will develop strong bonds with back office staff to further understand service delivery and feed this back across the whole team.
- Customers will be provided with information that clearly sets out our services, access routes, response times and we will keep them updated with progress so they are not having to follow up on their enquiry.
- We will be seen as approachable by our customers, we welcome feedback and are willing to admit our mistakes, learning from these.
- We will promote a culture where the needs and aspirations of customers are considered at every stage of our service redesign and delivery. Staff will be encouraged to be innovative and creative in reviewing, redesigning and delivering services to continuously improve the customer experience.

- By then end of 2024, we will continue with in-depth service reviews across all services that have touch points with our customers and that will include integrating customer feedback into ongoing service reviews and the development of customer services standards.
- We will review our community engagement and feedback processes to ensure wider participation and greater access to the feedback our customers provide, demonstrating where we have made improvements following their comments.
- We will develop an approach to personalised contact, enabling customers to receive proactive information on topics of interest to them.
- We will improve the way customers can engage with the council, adopting a proactive approach in our dealings with them.
- We will work with customers to understand how they access services and what we can do to improve those access points they do not use to help make dealing with their enquiries as quick and efficient as possible.
- We will have a direct involvement in the community engagement work required for the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and will ensure that customer contact with the Council meets the requirements identified.

We have created a delivery plan for all of the above:

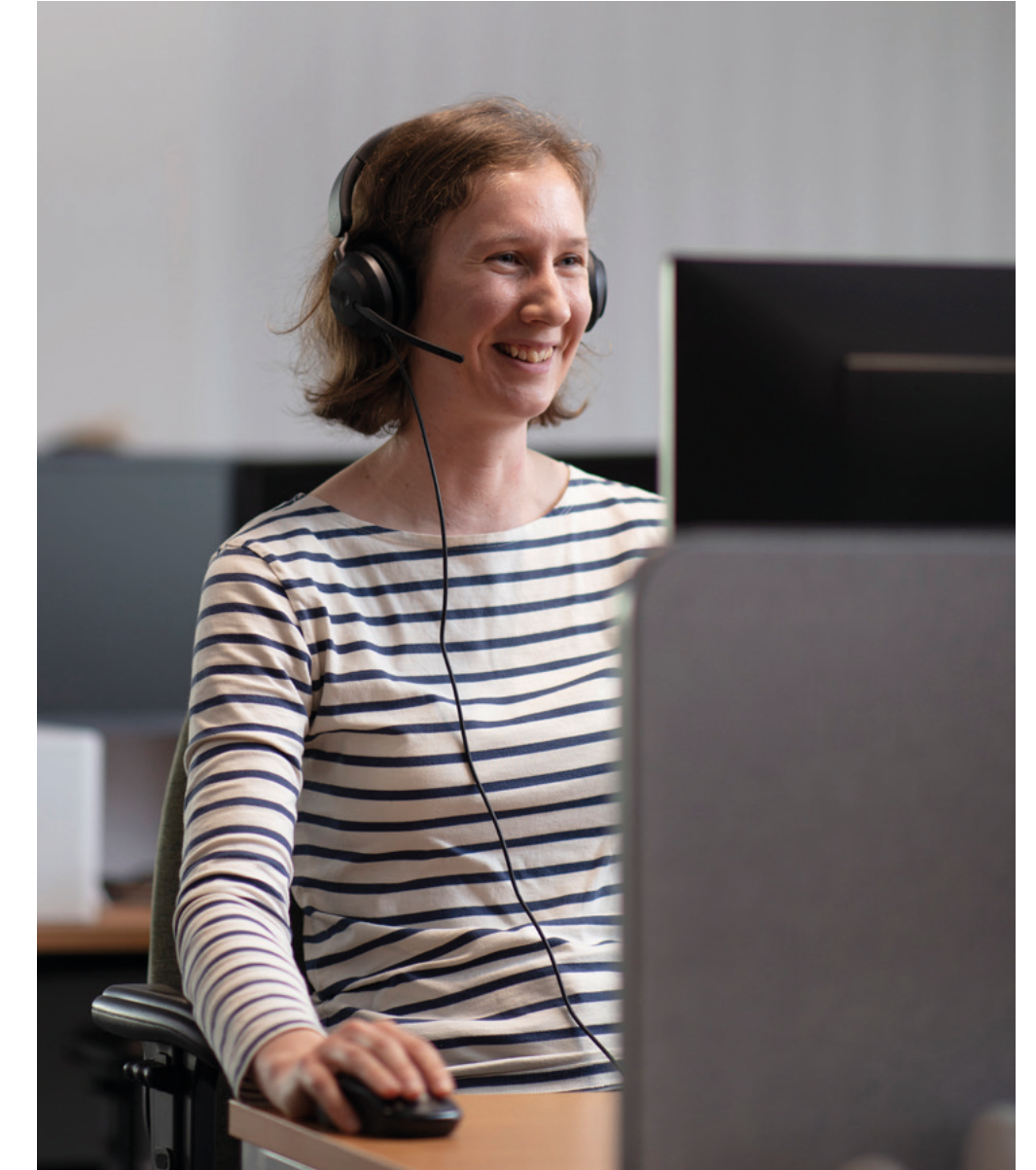
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/CustomerExperienceandInfluence

Monitoring:

This strategy will be reviewed in line with the Corporate Plan (4 yearly) and the next review will take place in 2028. The working documents (action plan) will be reviewed annually by the Quality Monitoring Board.

Documents of Interest:

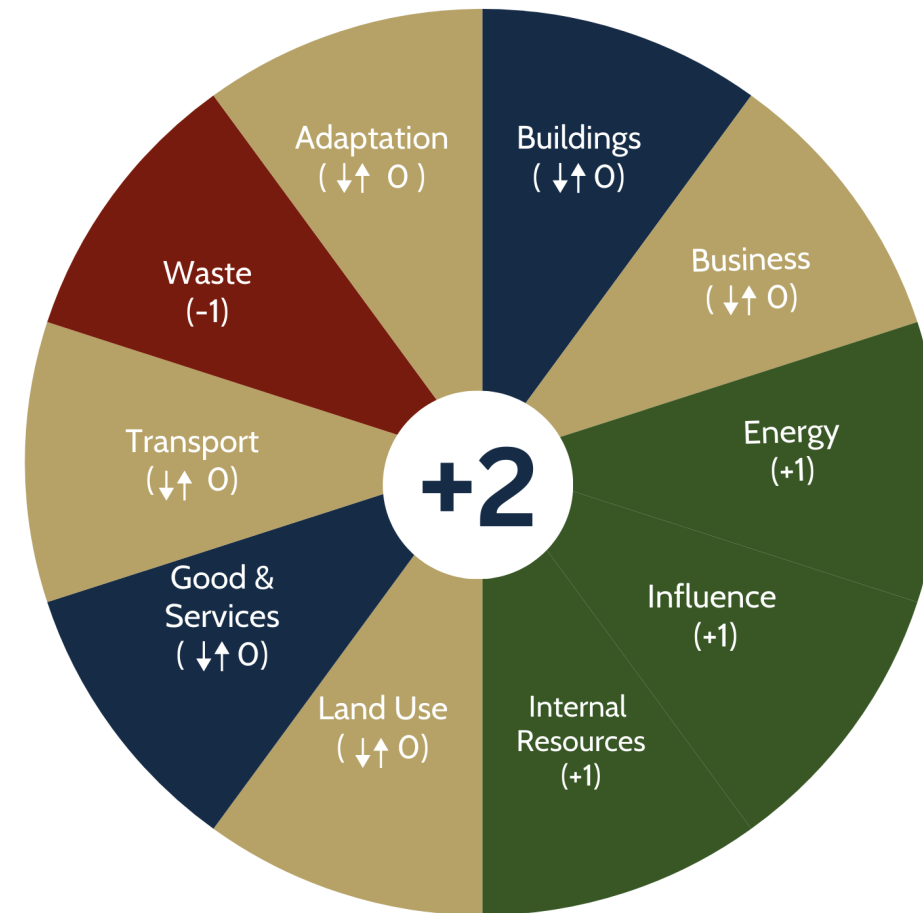
- Corporate Plan 2023-27
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/corporate-plan
- Equality Strategy 2020-24
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/equalitystrategy
- Customer Feedback Policy
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/feedback
- State of the District Report
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/council-democracy/facts-figures/information-about-district/state-district



The Customer Experience Strategy is likely to have relatively minor climate, environment and sustainability impacts.

Key points:

- Digitalising more services and enabling self-service could provide minor reductions in energy use and the environmental footprint of service delivery. However, a commitment to accommodating both digital and traditional access may require some additional resources and materials – particularly as population grows and new services are introduced. With resultant minor climate impacts.
- Improved community engagement and communication on topics of interest may indirectly support climate action. However, delivering greater consistency and access is likely to require more staff time.
- Population growth will increase demands on services and resources over time, including waste generation. However, impacts will be gradual and this is in no way a result of this strategy and should not be scored as such.
- The strategy does not significantly affect key areas like buildings, land use, transport and adaptation. More detailed environmental impacts may emerge in implementation plans for specific service changes.



**West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050
(25 years and 7 months away)**



If you would like a copy of this document in large, clear print, audio, Braille or in another language, please contact us via the details below.

За повече информация на телефон 01427 676676
Sīkāka informācija pa tālruni 01427 676676
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Pentru mai multe informatii sunati la 01427 676676
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Para más información llama 01427 676676
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Para mais informações ligue 01427 676676
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Feedback:

Be involved in shaping how your council delivers services, by registering for updates on community engagement pages or by joining our customer experience and influence panel.
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/consultation

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