CUSTOMER FIRST. DIGITAL JOURNEY.

Customer Engagement Strategy

2023-2025

Hull
City Council

CONTENTS

DRAFT VERSION 6

Who are our 'Customers'?

For Customer Services, a 'customer' is defined as any individual who interacts with, seeks information from, uses the services of, or transacts with Hull City Council, including reporting issues, booking appointments, paying for services and making applications.

In our definition of a customer we include residents, visitors and businesses.

03

INTRODUCTION

DRAFT VERSION 6

This strategy sets out our approach to the next stages of our digital journey, to deliver a 'customer first' digital customer service, ensuring we continue to develop a 24/7 digital access to services, through coordinated web access, easy-to-use web forms and an effective sign on to customer accounts.

The strategy has greater emphasis on the need to understand our customer behaviour, the experience they currently have and what we need to do to improve the customer journey, using digital systems to capture insight that we can use and learn from, to create a dynamic continuous improvement approach.

Understanding what we need our contact centre to deliver, how they need to respond to those customers without digital communications, ensuring they have a single view and are better informed about the customer, is a key development area in order to join up processes end to end.

As we understand the needs of hard-to-reach or disengaged customers, we will develop a network of local face-to-face support spaces in the communities, coordinated through the wider digital inclusion work in the city.

For our customers, this strategy outlines the improvements Hull City Council intend to make to the customer experience, and is inclusive of all protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

For our colleagues, it provides clear guidance on how we intend to deliver those improvements.

Our vision is a programme of events, identifying the key workstreams required to progress the strategy.

The dedicated resource of the Customer Journey Programme Manager will lead the programme, working together and facilitating service areas to make the best use of technology and digital systems, to deliver our corporate priorities.

05

OUR CORPORATE DRIVERS

LISTENING TO AND WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

SUPPORTING OUR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

BEING INNOVATIVE AND OPEN TO NEW IDEAS, A GOOD EMPLOYER AND AN ENGAGING PARTNER

- We will be Customer led, and aim to continuously improve the customer journey our service users experience

- We will rigorously test the service our customers' experience to ensure that it is inclusive and provides fair and equal access to all our users

- We will work alongside our partners to promote a common approach to joined- up service delivery

- We will ensure that our service is Value for Money

- We will value Customer Feedback as a guide to improving performance

06
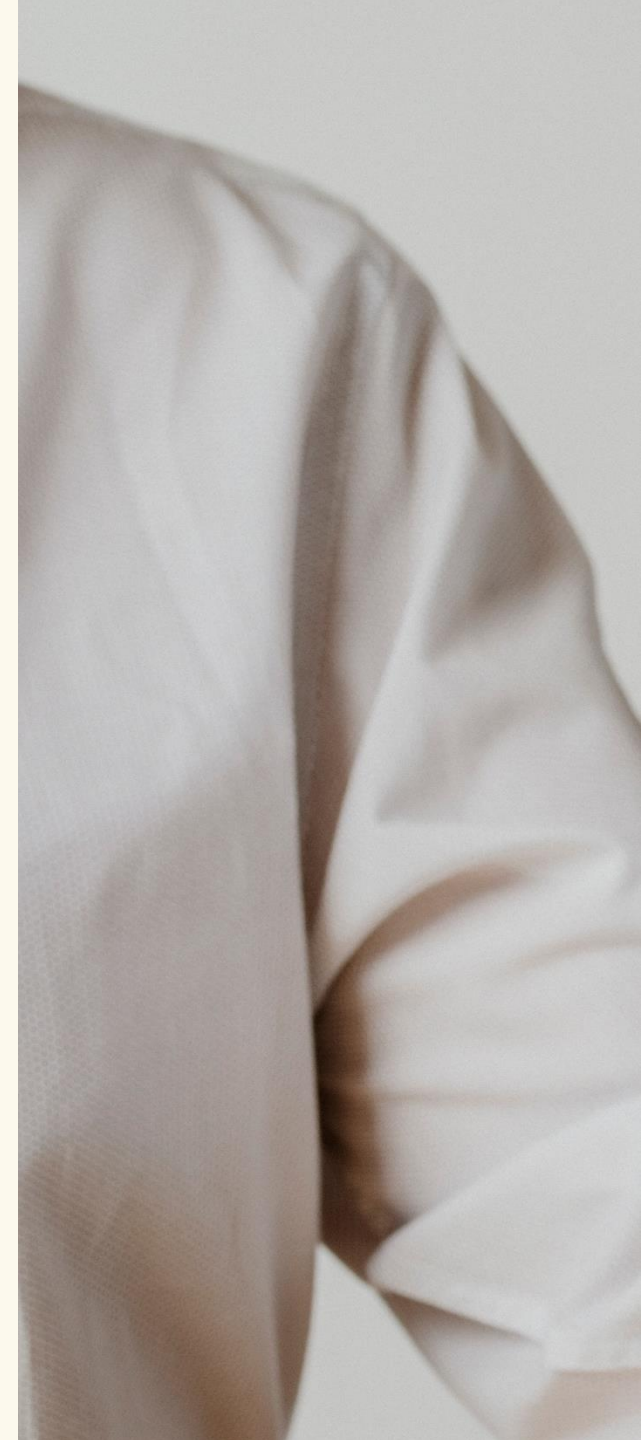
OUR VISION

We are committed to the delivery of an outstanding digital customer experience for our citizens and visitors to our city, so that Digital First becomes the preferred customer choice, and face to face and telephone interactions with customers are optimised to provide excellent customer support where it can add the greatest value.

08

OUR PRIORITIES

Customer Led Improvement

Excellent Website Experience

Providing Easy Access to Necessary Information

Reduced Digital Exclusion

09

PRIORITY 1

What are we trying to achieve?

In order to improve the experience our customers have with Hull City Council, we need to fully understand customer opinion of the current experience. We want to understand this process end-to-end, that is to say, from when a customer first hears about, or requires a Council service, to the point they consider that request or enquiry complete.

How will this impact our customers?

The better we understand their experience and customer behaviour, the more effectively we can enhance the parts that work well, and improve those that do not. We want to ensure customer's voices are heard, and that we are responding appropriately, with their best interests in mind.

How will this impact Hull City Council?

The richer the data we capture, the more effectively we can improve service delivery. Understanding customer needs mean we can get to the root of an issue more quickly and require fewer resources to make improvements.

10

CUSTOMER LED IMPROVEMENT

How will we do this?

- Enable digital feedback at our Customer Service Centres

- Enhance the feedback functions on the HCC corporate website

- Improve the feedback options for the Call Centre

- Develop a standardised customer satisfaction score

- Engage with service areas that receive significant inbound contact to deliver the standardised customer satisfaction score

- Develop a protocol to ensure the most appropriate feedback method is used

- Encourage sign-up to the HCC consultation survey, the People's Panel, via feedback channels

- Undertake regular consultation with customers through the Housing Tenant's Access Group Forum and VCS organisations

- Identify engagement channels for customer journeys

- Identify where engagement represents value or failure demand

- Update customer profiles to ensure current information is presented and align with ward profiles

- Install a live Web Chat function and pilot to capture customer feedback

How will we know when it's done?

As we enhance our understanding of the customer experience, we will have:

- Customer journey maps in place

- A coherent understanding of customer needs

- An agreed set of feedback measures

DRAFT VERSION 6

11

PRIORITY 2

What are we trying to achieve?

Our website receives over 175,000 visitors each month, however only 8.5% actually transact by reporting, applying, paying and booking services. We are also responsible for over 25 micro websites offering a variety of services, as well as numerous customer portals. We want more customers to engage meaningfully with our website, this means finding the information they need, as well as transacting. To do this we need to improve our current online offer and make the customer experience easier and quicker.

How will this impact our customers?

Engaging with us online often means quicker access to relevant and current information, faster response times, the opportunity for more regular updates on the progress of your requests, and provides a safe and secure means to transact with us. Interacting online also helps to free up our own limited internal resources; this is especially important when getting in touch about more straightforward enquiries that can be handled quickly online and allows us to be better equipped to deal with more complex and demanding council services such as social care.

How will this impact Hull City Council?

The more customers that engage meaningfully on the Hull City Council website frees up vital resources from other parts of the council including our Contact Centres and service areas teams. Engaging online where possible means these teams can be more devoted to helping with more complex requests, and focus their help on customers less able to go online.

The actions will also work towards the City Plan for digital environments and the Corporate Property Strategy for portals and engagement.

12

EXCELLENT ONLINE EXPERIENCE

How will we do this?

- Develop a standardised integrated approach to the Council's use of websites and web portals

- Embed website analytics and content training within Customer Experience and more widely position website analysis as business as usual activity within our customer focused services to deliver continuous improvement

- Implement a Federated Search engine to allow for ease of access to information presented by the Council through different websites

- Ensure all published information meets the digital access standards

- Integrate access to information in our web portals building on the implementation of Single Sign On

- Undertake website user experience reviews for all service areas to identify and implement areas of improvement

How will we know when it's done?

As we improve the website offer and encourage more engagement online we hope to see:

- An increase in website users

- An increase in transactions (report/apply/pay/book)

- A decrease in inbound call volumes to our Contact Centre

- Positive feedback through our customer channels

PRIORITY 3

What are we trying to achieve?

We receive thousands of contacts each month in which customers are requesting basic information, seeking clarity on a service, or chasing an existing enquiry, and we want to change this. The priority is threefold; we want customers to be better informed, we want customers to be able to inform us more easily, and we also want our staff to be better informed. Customers need to be aware of the services available from Hull City Council, and to be kept up-to-date with any updates to transactions with us. We envision this as a two-way street as we also want our customers to be able keep us informed of anything that might be important to them or their circumstances.

How will this impact our customers?

Increasing information provision means you will need to ask fewer questions and find what you need to know faster, and if you do get in touch, it also means our staff will have a much better understanding of your individual circumstances, and be able to provide more personalised support. In addition, providing realistic timeframes for requests and timely status updates means you won't need to spend your time chasing us, nor will you need to tell us the same information multiple times.

How will this impact Hull City Council?

Better information provision means we reduce avoidable contact with Hull City Council and reduces staff requirements for interactions that could be avoided or directed to a more relevant place. It also directly helps to reduce cost as staff will be able to help with a better range of enquiries without requiring access to multiple systems and licences.

This work will also help deliver the Corporate Plan, Hull Libraries Strategy, Digital Smart City Strategy and Cultural Strategy for engagement, information provision, data sharing and digital services.

14
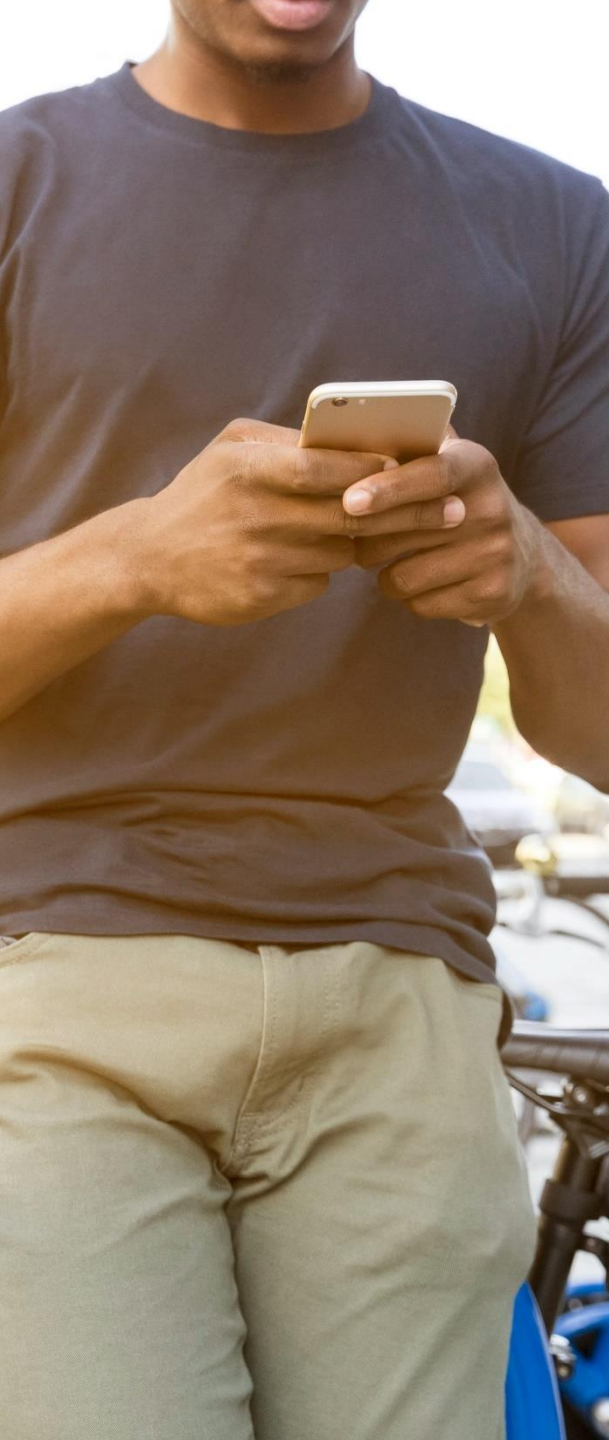
PROVIDING EASY ACCESS TO NECESSARY INFORMATION

How will we do this?

- Engage with service areas that receive significant inbound contact to automatically share and update customer information

- Agree and publish realistic resolution times for all service requests for service areas that receive significant inbound contact

- Install and utilise a customer relationship management (CRM) system to pull customer information into a secure central location

- Create a customer dashboard for customer and officer use

- Work with service areas to proactively push out customer information and status updates

- Develop a protocol to standardise the way in which respond to and contact customers, and engage with service areas that receive significant inbound contact to ensure this is delivered

- Review customer-facing content to ensure it is easy to understand and relevant

- Engage with Marketing and Media departments to align inbound and outbound social media engagement

How will we know when it's done?

As information is more easily accessible, we expect to see:

- A reduction in avoidable contact

- Fewer complaints

- Improved customer feedback

PRIORITY 4

What are we trying to achieve?

Although online interactions have become commonplace in the UK, 14% of people aged 16 years and over in Hull have never used the internet or have not used it within the last 3 months. In order to encourage more customers to engage with us online, we must develop digital skills and confidence, and highlight the benefits of digital engagement.

How will this impact our customers?

Being digitally included often means a better quality of life; online engagement opens numerous opportunities including employment, financial savings, time efficiencies, retail, and enhanced communication.

How will this impact Hull City Council?

Reducing digital exclusion widens our customer engagement reach and allows us to serve more customers, more easily and with a more tailored approach. By improving digital engagement, and subsequently online transactions, it also reduces resource requirement for other engagement channels such as our Customer Service and Contact Centres, meaning those teams are able to dedicate more time to more complex and critical enquiries.

This priority will also help deliver the Economic Strategy through digital accessibility and Local Plan through community hubs.

16

REDUCED DIGITAL EXCLUSION

How will we do this?

- Develop a baseline for digital inclusion in the city to enable progress to be effectively monitored

- Develop and employ a shared tool for assessing individual customer digital skill capability with our partner organisations

- Work with our partners to build a network of community access points across VCS organisations, libraries and community leaders

- Pilot 'Community Hubs' across the city through which we can work together with our partners to jointly support digital engagement

- Pilot a 'Here to Help' initiative with Children's Centres and Libraries to add value to every contact

- Identify how all engagement channels including Contact Centre and Customer Service Centres can assist with digital skills

- Seek out and bid for funding that encourages digital inclusion

How will we know when it's done?

As we reduce digital exclusion, we expect to see:

- An increase in online transactions from a broader demographic of customers

- Improved digital engagement against our baseline

- Confidence in customer digital capabilities increase

- Reports of increased engagement from our digital partners

**For further information,
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