

# CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER REFRESH

## COMMUNITY PANEL REPORT

FOR PRESENTATION TO THE CITY OF KINGSTON

*October 2017*

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to better express to council what the community perceives as good customer service. It is also to bring a fresh view to current customer service experiences and processes.

This report has been created for council to consider during their process of developing the Kingston Customer Services Charter Refresh.

### PROCESS IN CREATING THIS REPORT

The journey creating this report was over an intense two-and-a-half-day deliberative panel with over 30 people involved. These people were randomly selected by '*Deliberately Engaging*', an independent third party and facilitated by *MosaicLab*, also an independent third party engaged by the City of Kingston to pioneer this new process of greater community inclusion.

The 34 people that were selected by *Deliberately Engaging* were a broad spread representing the community including a mixed cultural spread and socio-economic backgrounds, expansive age range, an even gender spread, and selected from all residential locations within Kingston. These people were respondents to a wider communicated invitation of 10,000 people and then selected and invited to fit the broadest representation of the Kingston community as a community panel. 34 people commenced this process with 23 people attending the final day of report writing.

The community panel was a guided facilitated process which started after the panel's initial reading of the past Kingston charter and provided materials considered as relevant. These were provided as well as individual additional researched materials that individual panellists brought to the facilitated days. An online forum between the panel days was accessible for all personal comments and requests with an average of 20% of the panel sharing thoughts for feedback between sessions, and most participants viewed this if not wishing to comment.

With the help of the *MosaicLab* facilitated efficient guidance, the group identified and reduced important key customer service flaws and successes until an 80% of agreement or above by the group in the final draft was reached.

Throughout this process all participants shared their ideas together with keen interest.

### THE HOPES OF THE COMMUNITY PANEL

Our hopes are that this report is incorporated into the new 'Kingston Customer Services Charter' and that an overall inclusion is made of our feedback to Council. We hope that Council manage to only minimally change areas of our recommendations of good customer service and that they do this diligently and without bias, critiquing all information respectfully and honestly as through the community eyes.

However, the Council should be aware that in considering this report this gives rise to the following requirements:

- staff resourcing
- training
- establishing service standards
- providing tools
- processed revisions
- cultural and behavioural changes

We hope reconnecting Kingston community with Council through this process will build better future relationships between the Council and the Kingston community. We think that starting this process through the customer service avenues will assist with an improved relationship.

## THE CUSTOMER'S ROLE

The panel feels that the customer has a role when interacting with Council to help ensure a positive outcome. The customer's role and responsibilities of behaviour includes:

- Politeness
- Good behaviour
- Respect
- Listen
- Be clear about their requirements

## OUR EXPECTATIONS

### Expectation 1: Timely and Accurate Response

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

We expect to be provided with a clear and accurate response and within a specified timeframe for all enquiries, complaints and submissions.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

The meeting of this customer expectation will save valuable time to for both parties, achieve consistency and customer satisfaction, and this will enable the community to make the decision based on the accurate information received.

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

When this expectation is being met by Council, it will save time, close the loop and improve confidence between both parties.

### Expectation 2: Accurate Information

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

We expect information provided to be timely, accurate, relevant and consistent between departments.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

It's important to us that clear, concise and trustworthy information will allow an informed decision to be made correctly.

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

Hard rubbish to be collected - The community are given information that clearly defines what dimensions and volume that can be collected.

New mothers can contact Customer Service who will provide you with accurate information for times and places of Maternity Health Centres.

The measure of Customer Service equals seamless interaction with quality of information.

### Expectation 3: Knowledgeable Network of Connected Staff

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

We, the customer expect the customer service operator to have a strong knowledge of the organisation and can connect the customer with the relevant staff that can deal with the request and also offer different alternatives outside the Council parameters.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

This is important because

- Person to person interactions will offer solutions that are more specifically tailored to the needs of the customer
- Customers have more trust in people than they do with an automated machine
- Customers feel like their issues are being 'heard'. This is important for the customer service experience

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

The examples are as follows

- Customer service operators/council staff are well trained and educated about the internal processes that occur in the organisation
- Customers feel confident and satisfied
- Good word of mouth

### Expectation 4: Professional Response

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

We, the customer expect the specialised staff to know all aspects of their job.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

It provides immediate feedback to customers who have queries that are directly related to a sector of the organisation.

It allows customers will believe that their Council fees are well spent.

It allows Council to have better control and understanding of the communities needs how to meet them

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

The customers will have a greater sense of trust and reliability with the Council.

The customer feels empowered after receiving reliable knowledge, which is good personal relations for the Council.

## Expectation 5: Transparency of the Process

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

I will have the process explained to me and I will be provided with alternative ways to access these details.

This will include being able to see my issue tracked both internally and externally and receive notification throughout this process.

At the finalisation of the process I will know how and why the outcome was reached.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

It enables me to plan accordingly, allowing me to move to the next stage and ensures that the council is meeting my expectations.

It gives me the chance to bring closure to the issue or allows me to explore alternative courses of action.

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

There would be improvements in Customer Service Rating as surveyed on an annual basis.

This would be reflected by reduced customer complaints and in future customers may feel more inclined to be engaged with council.

## Expectation 6: Closing the loop

### **Description of this customer service expectation:**

The customer expects to be informed of the outcome of their enquiry and whether or not this conclusion has met their initial expectations.

Council should make every attempt to fulfil the customers inquiry and then inform the customer about how their input was used in reaching their decision.

### **Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

The community expects closure on their enquiries.

In this way, the customer can plan ahead and decide what the next step in the process will be.

### **Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

The customer will be satisfied and know that their enquiry has been actioned to the best of Council's' ability.

Council will have an effective feedback mechanism regarding how they reached the decision.

## Expectation 7: Access Channel Options

### **Description of this customer service expectation:**

The expectation of the customer is that they are able to communicate with council through a service channel that suits the needs of the individual, whilst experiencing the same level of continuity and access across all channels. This also includes face to face contact.

### **Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

Meeting this expectation is important to the community as it recognises the responsibility of the council to meet diverse user needs and caters to individuals from all demographics. This also improves the level of interaction between the community and the council.

With face to face contact, there would be greater satisfaction levels for some customers. It allows for greater accountability and responsibilities for the customer service staff handling the enquiries.

### **Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

By having multiple channels for access, this enables all members of the community to have the chance to communicate with council effectively and therefore generates interest and involvement.

Face to face contact will minimise frustration from certain members of the community that cannot access online or be understood over the telephone etc. of who have to provide relevant documentation.

## Expectation 8: Understanding Customer Needs

**Title:**

Understanding Customer Needs

**Description of this customer service expectation:**

We need council staff to listen and take the time to understand our issues. They should be able to deal with our issue or refer it to the best person that could resolve the matter while being empathetic and well mannered.

**Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

- Important to get a targeted need from the customer.
- The community expects that they can contact council and get some form of resolution.
- Expect efficient customer service.
- Expect that they are treated equally to everyone else.

**Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by**

Council:

- Sanitation technicians being able to escalate issues to other departments if a resident asks them about the park that they are visiting.



## Expectation 9: Interact with Technology

### **Description of this customer service expectation:**

We, the community, expect that customers can interact with technology confidently and that council staff utilises technology between each other to communicate and capture escalations of issues.

### **Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

- Technology provides a faster mechanism for response
- Technology provides a rationalized, concentrated version of the issue

### **Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

- A good website that centralises information and is accessible to anyone
- Enquiry tracking to ensure you are not 'lost in the system' that is visible to customers as well as staff
- Staff can therefore familiarise themselves with the issue quickly via an issue tracking system
- Issue tracking should be available at all times (24/7, but not necessarily staffed)

## Expectation 10: Consistent Experience and Standards

### **Description of this customer service expectation:**

We, the customer, expect a level of consistency when moving between customer service channels.

### **Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:**

- So customers don't get frustrated for having to repeat ourselves or getting lost within the system
- The systems should interact with each other so customers can use various channels of communications wherever they are
- Consistency gives customers confidence because it makes them feel that they are treated equally and fairly

### **Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:**

- When this is happening, customers will be getting a consistent and satisfying experience
- Customers will have a greater sense of trust the council with their issues

## Expectation 11: Friendly and courteous behaviour from staff across the organisation

<p><b>Description of this customer service expectation:</b></p> <p>We, the customers expect our inquiry to be dealt with in a polite, respectful, courteous and timely manner.</p>
<p><b>Why meeting this customer service expectation is important to the community:</b></p> <p>When staff members are well mannered, customers are more willing to cooperate and this will allow faster issue resolution.</p>
<p><b>Examples of what it will look like (or what will happen) when this expectation is being met by Council:</b></p> <p>When this expectation is being met by the council, it will result in customers being satisfied and engaged. This will benefit all parties involved.</p>

## PROCESS/SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1: Resourcing

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

Provide sufficient resources to provide customer service on an all of community basis.

*PLEASE NOTE: The following sections of this table (for this recommendation) need to be revised in line with the above description. The panel agreed to the description above in the final session on Day 3, and would like to advise Council that the below information may not be consistent with this description as it is now worded.*

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

If community members are properly supported by council, this will make them feel like they have more ownership of the program in partnership with the city. This will provide more confidence in council services throughout the community. This will also foster a greater culture of belonging to the city for residents and stakeholders.

It is also important that council properly resources in its own staff and services so that they can properly recognise demand and uptake so that council can be agile with its allocation resources throughout the entirety of the city's services.

This also allows for council to tailor customer service for a better experience. Having the processes put in place that will ensure that a high level of satisfaction is achieved.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

This may involve providing IT support provided by council for community groups (Such as friendship groups, youth services, deaf community and other communities supported by council) that may not be IT proficient. This may also involve support staff attending meetings to help with administration, minute taking, AUSLAN Interpreters or providing advice, which would bring trust to the council from the community.

If volunteers are insured with medical and ambulance cover, they would feel more valued by council and would encourage people to volunteer into the future.

When staff are resourced properly, they will have more confidence in providing services throughout the city. This may look like an IT Portal that gives them access to other departments that allows them to interact with the right people where they need to.

A higher quality of resources will give customers a greater sense of satisfaction and will make people more satisfied with the council.

## Recommendation 2: Metrics (Measurement and Performance Indicators)

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

As customers, we want the council to deal with requests in an agreed timeframe which reflects the nature of the matter referred to them. The council's capacity to meet timelines will support the KPI systems which can be subsequently used in the process of ongoing customer service improvement.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

Staff to be provided with Performance Benchmarks which align with the KPI systems. This gives them something to work towards, that will bring about constant improvement.

Consequently, customers will have confidence that these defined process standards are being applied.

The presence of metrics are absolutely essential in measuring performance, planning services and addressing hotspots/service failure and areas of underperformance. This will give council more foresight in how to address gaps and failures in service into the future.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

This will look like a measurement of how long it takes to resolve issues from first response to resolution. This measuring process will also highlight where more training is needed for staff.

If these processes are followed, it will result in fewer instances of negative feedback and will improve trust in council processes as there will be more accountability to the public.

## Recommendation 3: Customer Service Timeframe

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

Council should put in place a system that incorporates realistic time frames to meet customer expectations.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

The system improves the perception of the Council Service standard. This gives customers more confidence when given a timeline that a process is in place.

The community therefore has a better understanding of whether or when their expectations will be met.

It is also important to confirm with the customer that their needs are addressed to properly close the loop.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

Enquiries are dealt with effectively through a simplified triage system that they can shortcut if they so desire.

A move towards shift work (including weekends) means enquiries can be dealt within a realistic time frame.

By ensuring all customers are provided a timeline, there will be a reduction of phone calls to council to follow up if their enquiry is being dealt with and will increase patience in customers.

#### Recommendation 4: External Input

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

Council should be able to use external inputs to improve customer service outcomes.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

- Having external input can bring in fresh ideas, training and perspectives
- It is important to revolutionise customer service outcomes so they meet the current needs of customers
- Council may not currently be in a position to prioritise or deliver a particular service. External input can aid this and deliver success by suggesting solutions to the council that they are not aware of

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

- Community groups should have the ability to provide their suggestions to the council
- Council should be able to utilise external contractors to improve services
- Encouraging skilled volunteers to involve themselves with council customer service
- Professionally trained external facilitators stay to assist community groups deal with customer service

## Recommendation 5: Customer Centric ICT Systems

### **Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

We expect the council to implement a system of ICT platforms and channels that support the delivery of customer service by including the following features:

- 24/7 access
- Mobile optimised
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Safeguarding IT systems against hacking
- Future proofed/ ease of upgrade
- Suitable and specific for the customer service request
- User experience optimised (ease of use)
- Smart handling/ Inquiry Tracking System
- Customer feedback channels i.e. forum
- Disaster recovery and continuity of service

### **Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

- More efficient in terms of time, cost and service than traditional methods of customer service
- Enables more methods for the community to interact with the council
- Can enhance the delivery of information (more content in less time)
- More visibility of the whole process, therefore customers will have a greater confidence in the service provided.

### **Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

- Customer service is measurable/can be tracked
- Customer service is expedited as there are more options for self service
- Consistency of customer service
- Optimises the level of service (no under/over servicing)
- Customer service has broader reach to the community by offering more channels

## Recommendation 6: Council Transparency and Accountability

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

Council should actively promote transparency within its decision-making process. This involves making more prominent the report containing minutes, agendas and attendance in an easily accessible online format that is able to be tracked by the members of the community.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

This process encourages involvement and informs stakeholders to understand the reasons for the decision being made and the final outcomes.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

An online portal that allows easy access to the portion of the minutes relating to your 'issue'. This could be via a number of media such as newsletter, websites to other online discussion forums.

## Recommendation 7: Trained and Valued Staff

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

As customers, we would like to deal with courteous and well-trained staff from multicultural backgrounds (CALD).

Council should empower their staff in order to make appropriate decisions. Customer service staff members need to have specific knowledge within their department in order to make an adequate and fair decision.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

It is important to meet customer satisfaction and therefore it will reduce complaints. It will also improve council reputation by making it more approachable by diverse members and therefore it will encourage community engagements.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

If this type of process is implemented then council will gain a positive image and customers will gain a positive experience.

## Recommendation 8: Access and Equity

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

A process the council can implement for access and equity is if they consult all known user groups and minorities such as senior citizens, youth groups, disability, volunteers, interfaith groups and cultural minorities when introducing new channels or making changes to existing channels.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

Because it ensures that everyone has equal access to councils services and information and that the council hears what the community has to say

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

Advertisements of proposed changes to be made to the existing channels and proactive consultation with minority group leaders

## Recommendation 9: Sub-contractor Performance Management

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

Council must have clear terms in the Service Contract at the setup stage, with a performance review included quarterly, with training options included. Work undertaken by sub-contractors should be indistinguishable from work performed by council staff.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

This will meet the same level of customer service that Council is expected to provide. Customers may not know who are permanent staff or contractors. The training provided will ensure that the Contractors will be qualified and aware of council OH&S policies.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

It will instil confidence and satisfaction with council's overall service to the public, bridging the gap with the community. It also creates consistency across all areas of customer service. Council will be able to hire subcontractors to meet peak demands or backfill during staff absences without a degradation in service or customer satisfaction.



## Recommendation 10: Customer Feedback and Appeals Channels

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

We would like council to implement feedback channels (SMS, email, letter, phone call, face to face, online chat, etc) to improve services. Every time the council does not meet customer's rights, an appeals process should be a pathway provided. (Eg. VCAT, Ombudsman, other external provider)

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

This process is important because it builds customers' satisfaction and confidence in the whole system/organisation. Effective feedbacks and appeals will bring closure to the issues. People simply want to know how key decisions have been reached and what action they can take if they are not satisfied.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

If the system is implemented effectively then the council will see improvement in customer satisfaction and ability to engage with the wider community.

The Council's online portal will be updated on a regular basis to keep people informed. The My Kingston Newsletter will continue to be widely distributed. Libraries / Information Centres will be more widely used to provide updated information.

## Recommendation 11: Sufficient funding from current budget

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

The council should prioritise and allocate sufficient funds from the current budget to allow growth in customer service delivery.

The budget horizon may have to be over a 5-year period, where capital expenditure on new IT systems in early years is offset by savings in the later years.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

This allows customers to receive better customer service. Customers want to see their rates being spent effectively.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

Customer satisfaction will improve, reducing complaints therefore increasing better outcomes. Implementing new systems will provide efficiencies across a range of services.

## Recommendation 12: Budget Management

**Brief description of the type of process you would like to see Council implement (that will help Council to meet our customer expectations):**

The Customer Service review would have raised some new and already raised expectations for Customer Service. We would like to see that the funds appropriated to the installing of the customer service review is viewed within the CPI index already promised by the council. We would not like to see an immediate increase in rates. Maybe for some services that are not accessed by the general community, funds can be raised by 'pay as you go'.

**Why having this type process or system is important in regards to meeting customer expectations:**

Due to property developers the rates have increased and this puts a lot of pressure on the homeowner on a moderate to low income. People are becoming more acceptable of paying for above average services, eg. Toll Roads, if they believe that the service is worth it, however at the same time expect to have normal services provided for the payments that are already making.

**Examples of what it will look like or what will be happening when this type of process or system is implemented effectively.**

Customer satisfaction will improve, reducing complaints therefore increasing better outcomes. There will be a clear correlation between spending on improved Customer Service processes and the results of the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey.