

Three Rivers District Council

# Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2026

*Three Rivers  
'a great place  
to live, work  
and visit'*



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## Introduction

Three Rivers District Council's Customer Experience Strategy is based on the principals of using the most appropriate method to ensure we deliver council services for our customers in the most efficient and effective way.

This strategy influences the way the council interacts with its customers to deliver a service that is considered every step of the way.

In order to provide the best service possible, we need to evolve and modernise how we interact with customers. Customers increasingly want service that is fast, personalised, proactive and connected. That means making sure customers can interact with the council at a time and place of their choosing. It also means recognising that some people might need extra support to access services, and we must ensure it is available. It's about more than just technology. It's about an attitude and approach that treats all customers as individuals.



## Foreword

**I have always believed that Three Rivers is a great place to live, work and visit, and as a council we are working hard to ensure that this district always will be the very best it can. Our Customer Experience Strategy is designed to make sure that we achieve that ambition.**

**A district is made up of all the people who live, work and visit it – and it is the experiences of those people which are at the very heart of this strategy. We want our customers to feel valued and listened to, and we want our communication and contact channels to be efficient and effective in meeting our customers' needs, whilst maximising the use of technology and digital communications.**

**This strategy sets out clearly how we will achieve these aims – and ensures that in years to come Three Rivers will always be a great place to live, work and visit.**

*Councillor Sarah Nelmes -  
Leader of the Council*

# Our promise to you



## Our Vision:

To provide an excellent customer experience for our customers, first time, every time.

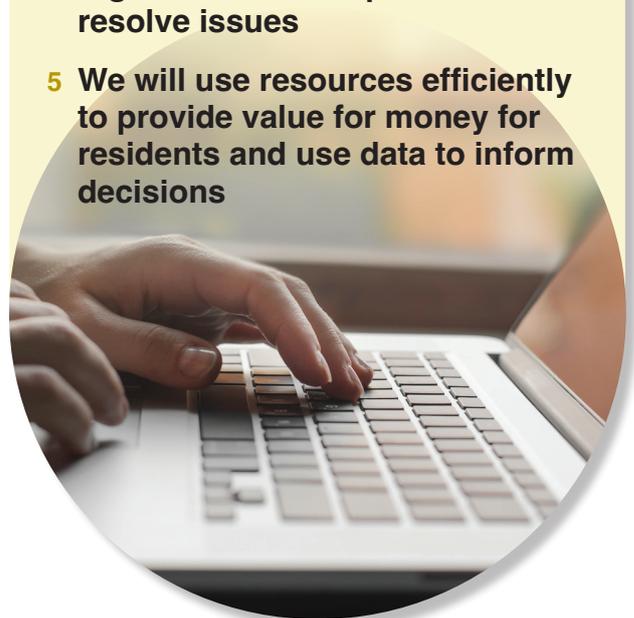
## Values

- To treat all customers as individuals and be accessible for all
- To be respectful and polite
- To take responsibility for our services
- To be open and honest with our customers about what we can and cannot do
- To listen to feedback and learn from our mistakes



## Objectives

- 1 Customers will have a choice in how they contact us
- 2 Customers will be encouraged to use online services and we will promote the advantages it offers
- 3 Information will be clear and easy to understand, helping customer enquiries to be answered fully the first time where possible
- 4 We will be proactive in dealing with customer enquiries working together across departments to resolve issues
- 5 We will use resources efficiently to provide value for money for residents and use data to inform decisions



# Who are our customers?



## Our customers

include any person, group of people or organisation who has contact or interaction with the council.



**Residents**



**Service users**



**Visitors to Three Rivers**



**Suppliers**



**Businesses**



**Partners**



**Colleagues**



**Community groups**



**Neighbouring authorities & government bodies**

# What do we mean by Customer Experience?



## Customer Experience

is the overall impression people have of their interaction with the council.

This relates to any and all interactions at any stage throughout the customer journey from initial contact to final outcome.

**The factors that make up the impression people have of their interaction with us include:**

### How we communicate

- Being clear about what we are responsible for and what we are able to control
- The reasoning behind decisions taken where we do have responsibility
- Using clear and easy to understand language

### The way we communicate

- The tone and manner we take and present to customers
- The effect we have on customers mood, emotions and feelings

### The environment and method in which we communicate

- The impact visual, audible, and tactile interactions have on customers

### The way we treat people

- The way our individual and team behaviour affects our customers
- Treating people with dignity and respect
- Treating people as individuals

# Supporting our Corporate Framework



## How our Customer Experience Strategy supports our Corporate Framework

The Customer Experience Strategy supports and underpins the council's Corporate Framework by helping to deliver the council's vision and objectives.

### *'Three Rivers - a great place to live, work and visit'*

#### **Provide responsive and responsible local leadership**

- Prioritise our customers' experience
- Proactively engage with our customers and provide accessible communication channels so we can understand what our customers want and need
- Provide services in a financially efficient and responsible way

#### **Support and enable sustainable communities**

- Signpost and provide information about what we are doing and the services we provide
- Use and encourage sustainable options to our customers wherever possible

#### **Expand our position as a great place to do business**

- Value local businesses as customers
- Engage with mutually beneficial initiatives

#### **Achieve net carbon zero and be climate resilient**

- Promote a digital first approach to communication, significantly reducing print and post to support our net carbon zero target

# What we know about our customers



**The resident population of Three Rivers in 2021 was 93,771.**

51.3% (48,121 people) identified as female and 48.7%, (45,650 people) as male

Interaction statistics 2021/2022 (1 April - 31 March)

**567,053**



Unique website visits

**21,862**



Households signed up to garden waste

**75,376**



Calls received via the call centre

**27,569**



Council Tax payers signed up to Direct Debit

**2,566**



Planning applications submitted

**66,254**



People on the electoral register

**2,105**



Businesses registered for business rates

**25,959**



E-newsletter subscriptions

**4,532**



Council Tax payers signed up to e-billing

**30,410**



Requests submitted via the customer portal

**30,768**



Social media engagement

**13,989**



Active customer portal accounts

# What our customers say about us



“Staff always helpful, but I usually go online to find out queries”



“Whoever answers the phone are always nice, polite and very helpful”



“Only had one occasion to contact you about my bin, was all on twitter. Very quick and easy to report and all resolved for me”



“Use online service regularly and it is 10/10”



“The staff are always patient and very helpful. So much simpler than a machine”



“Was impressed how easy it was to apply for a garage online”



“I only use the phone to contact the council as I like to speak with people and don't have access to IT”

# What have we achieved and learnt



## What have we achieved to date?



- Our improved Customer Portal (my.threerivers) allows customers to communicate with us through the use of self-service forms and a customer account
- Development of a new council website to be launched in April 2023
- Introduction of self-serve computers in the Visitor Centre at Three Rivers House
- Introduction of GovDelivery, an e-newsletter platform, allowing customers to sign up to updates for different information of their choosing
- Increase in the number of services available online through the Customer Portal
- Increase in transactions completed online with a reduction in transactions completed over the telephone

## What have we learnt?



- Customers want services that are convenient and can be accessed 24/7
- Technology is constantly developing and we should ensure we are able to be flexible and adapt processes in line with development
- Social media is an increasingly effective way of communicating with our customers
- Not all services are best served online e.g. benefits support and we should use data to support decisions
- Awareness of the previous Customer Experience Strategy (2019-2023) varied between stakeholders and so increasing awareness and communication of the new strategy is important
- The language we use when communicating with customers is sometimes overly technical, complicated and unclear
- Customer feedback has suggested the current website is not as user friendly as it could be and therefore find it difficult to access online services
- One bad experience could lead to reduced confidence so making sure our processes are simple, clear and well tested before going live is important
- A digital first approach means online should be a quick and easy way to provide the service

# What will we do?



## Our Objectives

Objectives	Action
<p><b>We will give customers a choice in how they contact us</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing online services that are available 24/7</li><li>• Continuing to increase the range of services available online via the Customer Portal</li><li>• Providing a telephone option for those who do not have access or are unable to use the internet</li><li>• Providing a face to face option and computers for customers to use online self-service in the Visitor Centre at Three Rivers House</li></ul>
<p><b>We will encourage customers to use online services and promote the advantages it offers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making all services available online where appropriate</li><li>• Providing fast, efficient, easy to use integrated online services</li><li>• Creating online forms to enable integration and automation</li><li>• Prioritising and encouraging electronic communications</li><li>• Increasing awareness and the benefits of online services</li></ul>
<p><b>We will present information that is clear and easy to understand and try to answer customer enquiries fully the first time where possible</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining a well presented and easily accessible website that has relevant and up to date information</li><li>• Developing training of staff</li><li>• Publishing frequently requested information on our website and circulated via e-newsletters and social media</li><li>• Ensuring information and communication is clear, up to date and accurate</li><li>• Utilising current systems and platforms to streamline service delivery</li></ul>

# What will we do?



## Our Objectives

Objective	Action
<b>We will be proactive in dealing with customer enquiries and work together across departments to resolve issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with issues and problems as quickly and thoroughly as possible and following up on any unresolved issues</li><li>• Listening to the customer and actively seeking to resolve their concerns</li><li>• Setting clear expectations about service delivery and delivering what has been promised</li><li>• Delivering a consistent customer experience across all departments and encouraging a culture of responsibility and ownership for service delivery</li><li>• Working together across departments providing support and co-operation</li></ul>
<b>We will use resources efficiently to provide value for money for residents and use data to inform decisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encouraging customers who can, to use online forms of communication to free time for staff to deal with more complex issues or for those who have no way of accessing digital services</li><li>• Improving internal communication and data sharing so customers only have to contact us once</li><li>• Using data to prioritise areas for improvement and focusing on those issues that affect large numbers of people first</li><li>• Sharing data across departments to improve customer service</li><li>• Listening to customer feedback and learning from our mistakes and successes</li></ul>

# How will we know we are succeeding?



To track our progress against this strategy, we will use multiple sources of data and information to measure improvement.

Objective	Measure
<p><b>We will listen to customer feedback including:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results from the Resident Survey to measure resident satisfaction levels (results can be benchmarked against national results, through the Local Government Association's Resident Survey)</li><li>• Service specific satisfaction surveys and user evaluation</li><li>• Compliments and complaints information</li></ul>
<p><b>Making good use of our data including:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of people using channel communication</li><li>• Platform usage and engagement statistics (including website, social media and customer portal)</li><li>• Volumes of compliments and complaints, and analysis of themes and trends</li><li>• Customer journey mapping (both ideal states and current experiences)</li></ul>

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