



CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2018-2022

Helping to achieve Council's vision of a prosperous, engaged and vibrant community



DOCUMENT INFORMATION

DOCUMENT TYPE: Strategic document

DOCUMENT STATUS: Approved

POLICY OWNER POSITION: Director Corporate Services

INTERNAL COMMITTEE ENDORSEMENT:
APPROVED BY: Council

DATE ADOPTED: 27/03/2018

VERSION NUMBER: 1


REVIEW DATE: 27/03/2022

DATE RESCINDED:

RELATED STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS, POLICIES OR PROCEDURES: Customer Service Charter
Complaint Handling Framework
Disability, Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021
IT Strategy 2017-2022
Communication and Community Engagement Policy
Social Media Policy and Strategy

RELATED LEGISLATION: [Click here to enter text.](#)

EVIDENCE OF APPROVAL:


Signed by Chief Executive Officer

FILE LOCATION: K:\EXECUTIVE\Strategies policies and procedures\Documents waiting to be updated\web\STR Customer Service Strategy 2018-22 v1.docx

Strategic documents are amended from time to time, therefore you should not rely on a printed copy being the current version. Please consult the Loddon Shire website to ensure that the version you are using is up to date.

This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
	1.1 Council's Vision and Values.....	4
	1.2 Supporting strategies and plans.....	5
2	PURPOSE	5
3	BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	5
	3.1 About Loddon Shire and the community.....	5
	3.1.1 Location and geography.....	5
	3.1.2 People.....	6
	3.1.3 Ethnic composition.....	6
	3.1.4 Ageing population.....	7
	3.1.5 Income levels.....	7
	3.1.6 Socio-economic indexes for areas.....	7
	3.1.7 Educational levels and qualifications.....	8
	3.1.8 Need for assistance.....	8
	3.1.9 Economy.....	8
	3.1.10 Economic profile changes.....	9
	3.1.11 Internet connectivity.....	9
	3.1.12 Councillors and wards.....	9
4	OUR SERVICES	10
	4.1 Key statistics.....	10
	4.2 How we currently deliver services.....	10
	4.2.1 Overview.....	10
	4.2.2 Customer service.....	11
	4.3 Challenges and looking to the future.....	11
5	COMMUNITY CONSULTATION	11
	5.1 How we consulted.....	11
	5.2 What the community has told us.....	13
6	CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER	13
	6.1 Guiding principles.....	13
	6.2 Help us to help you.....	13
	6.3 Access and inclusion.....	13
	6.4 Have your say.....	14
	6.5 Our service and standards.....	14
	6.6 Payment methods available.....	15
	6.7 Complaints.....	16
	6.8 Privacy.....	16
7	ACTION PLAN	16
8	REVIEW OF STRATEGY	18

1 INTRODUCTION

The Customer Service Strategy 2018-2022 (Strategy) outlines Loddon Shire Council’s strategic approach to the delivery of customer service across the Shire over the next four years.

This is the first time Loddon Shire Council has developed a Strategy focused on the customer experience and the service received. The Shire recognises the importance of achieving a sustainable balance in the range and accessibility of customer service options available for the community.

The Strategy was developed in consultation with the community, internal Council stakeholders and informed by research activities including analysis of customer service data.

The activities outlined in this document have been reviewed by Council and the community and will be implemented over the next four years.

1.1 Council’s Vision and Values

The Strategy aligns with Council’s Core Values as outlined in the Council Plan 2017-2021. It provides a sound basis and direction from which Council can plan and make future decisions over the next four years.



The development of the Strategy is further supported in the Council Plan 2017-2021:

5.4.5 - Theme: High Performing Organisation		
Strategy	Action	Strategic Indicator
2 - Quality customer service <i>Improve communication with community and customers</i>	Create better opportunities for the community to access Council information, services and support	1 - Review the Customer Service Charter and develop a Customer Service Strategy

1.2 Supporting strategies and plans

The Shire has a number of other strategies and plans in place to support our customers. This Strategy draws upon a wider Council policy context:

- Disability, Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021
- IT Strategy 2017-2022
- Complaint Handling Framework 2017
- Communication and Community Engagement Policy 2014
- Social Media Policy and Strategy 2013.

2 PURPOSE

Loddon Shire Council is committed to providing quality customer service, and creating better opportunities for the community to access Council information, services and support.

The Strategy has been designed to particularly address the following key strategic directions:

1. Provide customer service that is accessible and flexible enough to meet the changing needs of our community.
2. Communicate and engage effectively with our community.
3. Allocate customer service resources to the areas of most need.
4. Improve our responsiveness and monitor our performance.
5. Develop an organisation-wide approach and training for customer service delivery.
6. Review and streamline our processes.
7. Provide Council staff with the tools required to deliver effective customer service.

The Strategy contains an action plan to address these strategic directions.

3 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 About Loddon Shire and the community

3.1.1 Location and geography

Loddon Shire is located in central Victoria, about 175 kilometres north-west of the Melbourne CBD. Loddon Shire is bounded by Gannawarra Shire in the north, the Shire of Campaspe and the City of Greater Bendigo in the east, Mount Alexander and Central Goldfields Shires in the south, and Northern Grampians and Buloke Shires in the west.

Loddon Shire is within the Loddon Mallee Regional Development Australia region which constitutes almost a quarter of the state and is region known for the highest number of small towns in Victoria.

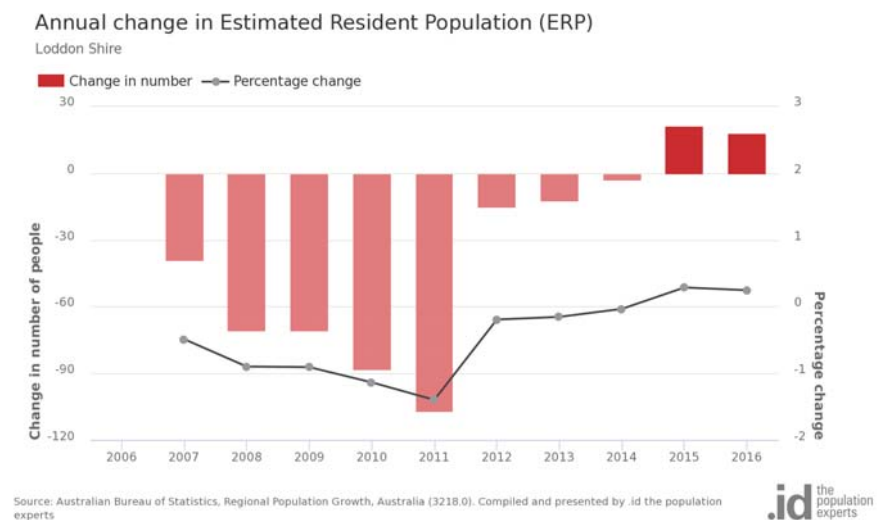
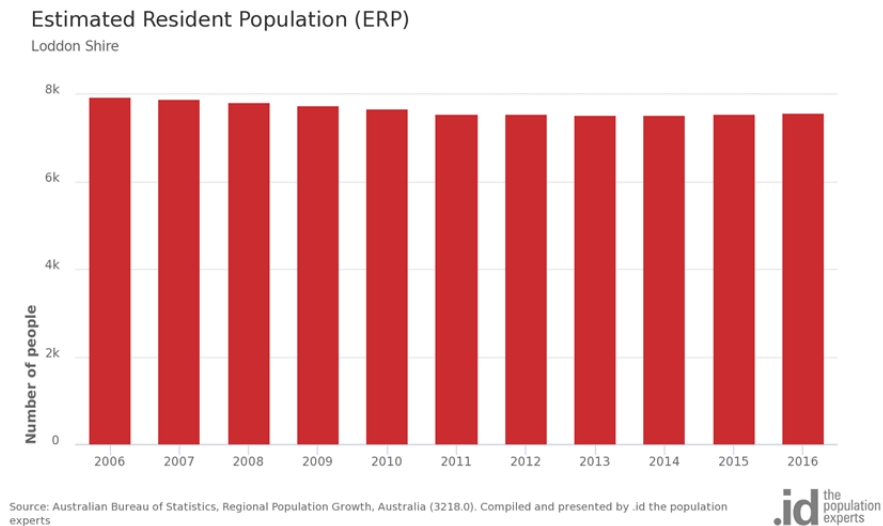
Loddon Shire encompasses 6,700 square kilometres and is a 'community of communities', comprising a number of small towns dispersed throughout the shire



including the towns of Bridgewater, Inglewood, Wedderburn, Dingee, Mitiamo, Serpentine, Newbridge, Tarnagulla, Boort, Pyramid Hill and other surrounding villages and communities. These townships are diverse but they are connected by our Council which strengthens them as a whole.

3.1.2 People

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population for 2016 (2016 ERP) was 7,555. This is made up of more than 2,780 in the north (2016 ERP), compared with over 4,810 in the south (2016 ERP). There is a trend of population increasing in the south of the Shire and decreasing in the north.



The 2013 Loddon Mallee South Regional Economic Outlook report forecasts ongoing overall population decline in the longer term of 0.23% to 2026. Population forecasts predict that the number of residents living in the Shire will decrease slightly each year. In the last decade there has been a decrease in the number of family households and an increase in lone person households. Both mortgage repayments and rentals are relatively low, reflecting cheaper housing prices in Loddon Shire compared with regional cities and metropolitan Melbourne.

3.1.3 Ethnic composition

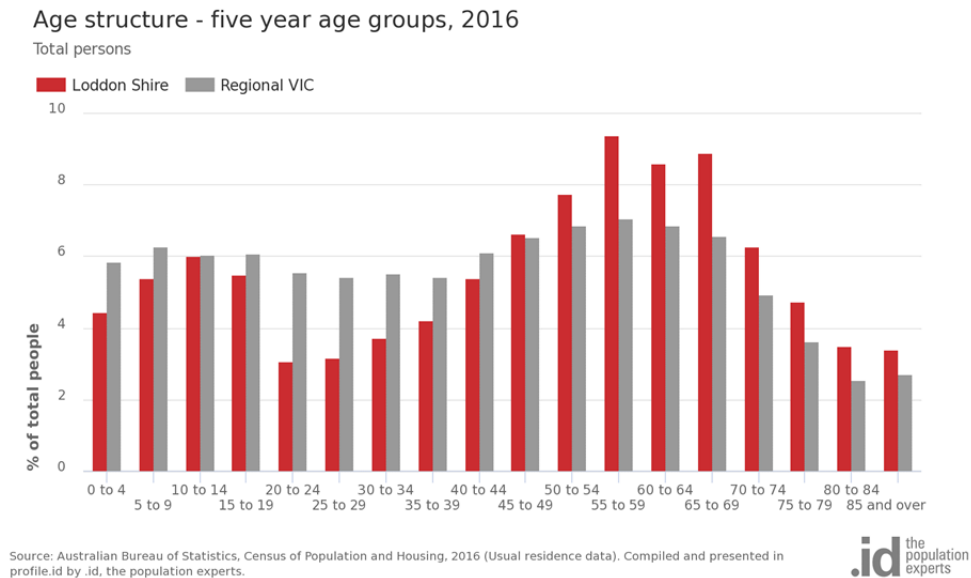
The majority of Loddon Shire's population was born in Australia however, 8% came from other countries. Only 3% of residents have identified as speaking a language other than English at home.

The ethnic composition reflects that of regional Victoria, and relative to Australia's urban centres, is not vastly diverse.

3.1.4 Ageing population

Just over 21% of the population is under 19 years of age, 43.3% of the population is in the traditional working age group (19-59) and 35.7% is in the traditional retirement age group (60+). Like many other rural municipalities, the number of older adults living in the community is expected to grow considerably in coming years.

The Loddon area is seeing a decline in people less than 50 years of age and an increase in older employees or retirees settling in the municipality.



Analysis of the service age groups of Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years).

3.1.5 Income levels

Analysis of household income levels in Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a smaller proportion of high income households (those earning \$2,500 per week or more) and a higher proportion of low income households (those earning less than \$650 per week).

Overall, 5.8% of the households earned a high income and 31.9% were low income households, compared with 12.5% and 22.9% respectively for regional Victoria.

3.1.6 Socio-economic indexes for areas

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a number, or series of 4 numbers, which ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in Local Government.

The most disadvantaged Shire within Victoria is recorded as Central Goldfields followed by Greater Dandenong. The northern area of Mildura is ranked third with Loddon fourth most disadvantaged followed by Northern Grampians.

3.1.7 Educational levels and qualifications

Analysis of the highest level of schooling attained by the population in Loddon Shire in 2016 compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a higher proportion of people who had left school at an early level (Year 10 or less) and a lower proportion of people who completed Year 12 or equivalent.

Overall, 40.8% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 27.3% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 34.2% and 38.9% respectively for regional Victoria.

Analysis of the qualifications of the population in Loddon Shire compared to regional Victoria shows that there was a lower proportion of people holding formal qualifications (Bachelor or higher degree; Advanced Diploma or Diploma; or Vocational qualifications), and a higher proportion of people with no formal qualifications.

Overall, 35.8% of the population aged 15 and over held educational qualifications, with 47.8% having no formal qualifications. This is compared with 45.0% and 47.8% respectively for regional Victoria.

3.1.8 Need for assistance

Analysis of the need for assistance of people in Loddon Shire compared to Regional VIC shows that there was a higher proportion of people who reported needing assistance with core activities.

Overall, 7.4% of the population reported needing assistance with core activities, compared with 6.0% for regional Victoria.

This need for assistance is often met voluntarily by family members and friends. Our volunteer rates are higher than other areas of Victoria. Over one third of our residents volunteer their time and skills to people with disabilities, long term illness and problems associated with ageing; as well as to other tasks such as unpaid childcare and domestic work; and to various community-based organisations and groups.

3.1.9 Economy

Loddon Shire's Gross Regional Product is estimated at \$0.39 billion, which represents 0.1% of Victoria's Gross State Product.

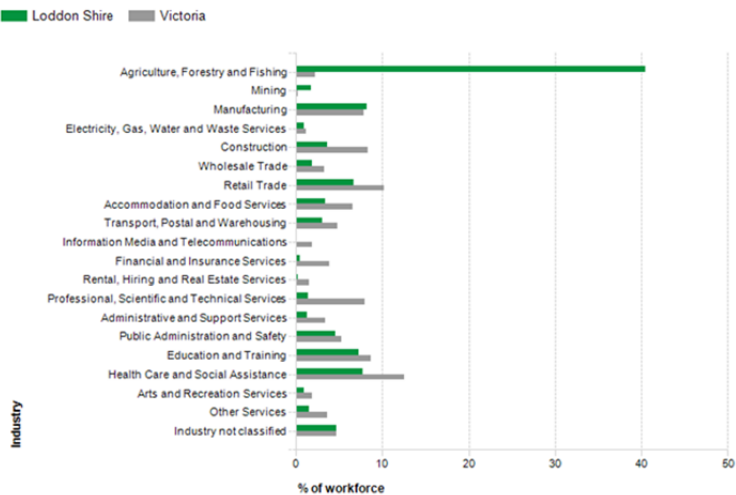
There were 3,066 local jobs in Loddon Shire in 2016. An analysis of the jobs held by the local workers in Loddon Shire in 2016 shows the three most popular industry sectors were:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (1,069 local workers 40.4%)
- Manufacturing (218 local workers 8.2%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (204 local workers 7.7%)

In combination these three industries employed 1,491 people in total or 56.4% of local workers.

In comparison, Victoria employed 2.2% in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; 7.8% in Manufacturing; and 12.5% in Health Care and Social Assistance.

Employment (Census) by industry sector, 2016



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016
Compiled and presented in economy.id by .id, the population experts.



3.1.10 Economic profile changes

Nature-based tourism is a potential new industry segment and represents a significant development opportunity to attract visitors into the shire. Significant nature tourism assets such as the Loddon River, Mount Kooyoora, Terrick Terrick National Park and the Boort wetlands offer a new and quite unique group of experiences to a broad range of visitors.

Nature and natural heritage are an important part of what makes the region attractive to tourists and new residents alike.

3.1.11 Internet connectivity

Internet use in the Shire is lower than the state average, however it has increased markedly since 2006. In 2006, only 13% of residents had access to internet connections. By 2016, this grew to 62%. However, 25% of the population continues to have no internet connection at all. The agricultural sector relies heavily on electronic communications and associated technologies.

Mobile phone coverage, broadband and wireless internet and satellite GPS services are now essential for the modern competitive agricultural enterprise. With agriculture being the dominant sector of our economy, it is essential that investment in electronic communication and associated technology continues.

3.1.12 Councillors and wards

Loddon Shire Council consists of five councillors elected from five wards.

The five wards of Loddon Shire are:

- Boort Ward
- Inglewood Ward
- Tarnagulla Ward
- Terrick Ward
- Wedderburn Ward



Details about the wards and councillors can be found on Council’s website: www.loddon.vic.gov.au.

Under the Local Government Act 1989, Councillors are elected to be the governing body of our municipality. Our Councillors play a vital leadership role in creating and implementing our community's vision, strategic direction and the values within which we operate. Our Councillors guide the development of local policies, set service standards and priorities and monitor the performance of the organisation. Other responsibilities of Councillors include determining the financial strategy and budget, allocating resources, and liaising with other levels of government.

Council's Ordinary Meetings are held in the Council Chamber at the Serpentine Shire office, 37 Peppercorn Way, Serpentine on the fourth Tuesday of each month and commence at 3pm.

Should a public holiday fall on the fourth Tuesday, the meeting is held the next day. The meeting timetable is set for 12 months in advance by December each year.

4 OUR SERVICES

4.1 Key statistics

Customer Service Snapshot – Loddon Shire Council		2016/17
Population		7,555
Geographic area of municipality		6,700km ²
EFT Customer Service Officers (Wedderburn)*		1.0
Customer requests lodged		3,145
Telephone calls to customer service		17,679
Telephone calls direct to departments		4,468
After hours phone calls to Council		799
Most common customer request types		Rates Building and Planning Road maintenance Animal management Garbage service Trees

* The Serpentine Office has staff available to assist with customer service enquires.

4.2 How we currently deliver services

4.2.1 Overview

Loddon Shire Council's Customer Service operations include:

- interpersonal service delivery at its two offices (counter enquiries and requests)
- interpersonal service delivery and interactions over the phone, internet, mail and email
- online payment capability via BPay for most services
- payment of Council accounts can also be made in person at approved agencies:
 - Boort - Boort Resource and Information Centre, 119 Godfrey Street
 - Bridgewater - Post Office, 4 Main Street
 - Dingee - General Store, 18 Mack Street
 - Dunolly - Rural Transaction Centre, 109 Broadway
 - Inglewood - Bendigo Bank, 64 Brooke Street
 - Mitiamo - General Store, 5 Joffre Street
 - Pyramid Hill - Newsagency and Post Office, 12-14 Kelly Street
 - Tarnagulla - Post Office, 101 Commercial Road
- Council operates an accredited Visitor Information Centre at the Wedderburn Community Centre. This service is operated specifically as a visitor and tourism information provision. This Centre is open seven days per week excluding Good Friday, Anzac Day and Christmas day. Operating times are Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm, Sundays and public holidays 10am to 4pm.

4.2.2 Customer service

The Customer Service Team is well trained, multi skilled and able to assist with less complex customer enquiries, without referring the customer to another Council officer. This includes telephone and operating on a 'face to face' customer contact basis at two Council Centres:

- Wedderburn Shire Offices (main customer service operations)
- Serpentine District Office (limited services).

Customers are able to contact Council Customer Service via telephone from 8.15am to 4.45pm Monday to Friday.

Council centre hours for in person service:

- Wedderburn - 8.15am to 4.45pm Monday to Friday
- Serpentine - 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Serpentine generally operates as a stand-alone facility, with most customer service interactions via the telephone, and low face to face customer contact. Officers from the Community Services Department are housed at this site. The customer service provided is combined with other activities, primarily support the functions of this department.

Council provides a 24/7 emergency after-hours service. This service is provided internally by nominated officers on a rotating roster basis.

4.3 Challenges and looking to the future

Loddon Shire is a 'community of communities', spread across more than 6,700 square kilometres. A challenge exists for Council in the provision of equitable customer service delivery across the Shire's geographical vastness.

Loddon Shire's population historically has been in decline, has a relatively low SEIFA rating compared to surrounding Council areas and residents that are aging faster than the rest of Victoria. The ability for the community to access the internet is also relatively low due to both the availability and knowledge around the technology. Digital communication channel preferences continue to evolve and Council needs be responsive to these technological advances. Council also needs to ensure that accessible multi-channel options are available to the community for lodging requests or seeking information. Having the ability to speak to someone over the phone or in person is considered highly important by the community.

The Victorian State Government mandated rate capping places additional pressure on Council to reduce the cost of service delivery. Under the plan, Councils are directed to cap rate increases at a figure set by the Minister for Local Government.

Approximately two-thirds of Loddon Shire's budget is reliant upon state and federal government grants. Council is challenged with continuing to secure adequate financial support in an increasingly competitive environment. Maintaining the way in which Council is able to deliver services to the community is reliant on provision of this external funding.

5 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

5.1 How we consulted

To support the development of this Strategy a community survey was conducted between September and November 2017 to better understand community views and needs in relation to customer service delivery.

The survey addressed preferred communication / transaction options and gauged how satisfied customers were with a range of service aspects. The survey also gave customers the opportunity to generally comment on their concerns and service experiences with the Shire.

A questionnaire was made available for completion online via Council's website and with iPads provided at Council Centres for survey completion. A hard copy questionnaire was also available.

Survey interviews were undertaken by a Council officer equipped with an iPad at community events in each Ward:

- 30 September 2017 – Tarnagulla Strictly Vintage Fair
- 14 October 2017 – Boort Annual Agricultural Show
- 22 October 2017 – Wedderburn Open Gardens
- 28 October 2017 – Pyramid Hill Fiesta
- 5 November 2017 – Inglewood Alive Town Festival.

A communications plan was developed to coordinate community messaging. The survey was promoted via the following methods:

- media releases
- published on Council's website, including the web banner
- posts on Council's Facebook page promoting the survey during the consultation period reached more than 3090 people
- mayoral column
- invitations to participate in the online survey were emailed to 173 community groups and organisations across the Shire
- option to enter a prize draw to win a \$100 hamper of local produce.

As part of the survey, respondents were able to register their interest in attending a community workshop to further explore their ideas on Council customer service delivery.

A total of 124 customers responded.

Following the review of the survey responses, a series of community workshops were facilitated on 30 November and 6 December 2017 to provide community members with an opportunity to provide feedback via interactive group discussions; and to build on the feedback provided in the surveys.

Community workshop opportunities were advertised through various media channels including:

- Mayoral Column
- media releases
- Facebook
- emails to survey participants and community group contacts.

Due to the prediction of a severe weather event, workshops at Inglewood and Tarnagulla were rescheduled from 1 December to 6 December 2017.

The workshops were held in each of the five Shire ward areas as follows:

Date	Township	Venue	Participants
30 November 2017	Pyramid Hill	Senior Citizens Centre	5 people
	Boort	Senior Citizens Centre	0 people
	Wedderburn	Senior Citizens Centre	2 people
6 December 2017	Inglewood	Neighborhood House	3 people
	Tarnagulla	Tarnagulla Hall	1 person

The draft strategy was prepared, and made available for community comment and suggested refinements during February 2018, prior to adoption by Council.

5.2 What the community has told us

The community told us that:

- they need to continue to have multiple service channel options available, both when contacting Council and when receiving information from Council. The ability to speak to a 'real person' either on the phone or in-person is considered highly important
- they would like improved access to Council service in townships
- satisfaction with customer service received was high - in relation to aspects such as courtesy and friendliness of Council officers
- some of the main issues identified by the community relate to responsiveness, including lack of follow up and timeliness of responses
- the most common words that community members used to describe an ideal customer experience with Council include:
 - friendly, helpful and pleasant
 - knowledge, accurate and informative
 - fast, timely and follow up
 - courteous, polite and listen
 - easy and simple.

6 CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

Our Customer Service Charter sets out our commitment to you. This Charter details the level of service you should expect to receive from us, and what to do if you feel these expectations aren't met.

6.1 Guiding principles

Loddon Shire Council is committed to providing quality customer service, and creating better opportunities for the community to access Council information, services and support.

Our customer service principles outline our promise to you. We will:

- be friendly, courteous and treat you with respect
- provide accurate and consistent information that is easily understood
- be responsive, follow up your requests and advise you of the status as required
- listen to you and seek your feedback
- provide accessible service options.

6.2 Help us to help you

We want to provide you with the best possible customer service – you can help us by doing the following:

- provide accurate and complete information
- treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- work with us to reach a resolution
- advise us if your details change
- give us feedback on how we have performed
- contact us to make an appointment if you have a complex enquiry or need to speak with a specific officer.

6.3 Access and inclusion

Council is committed to ensuring services are accessible and flexible to meet the changing needs of our community.

If your understanding of English is low or you need some help in understanding any of the services Council delivers, we can offer alternative formats and services.

We will provide accessible information for people with a disability or otherwise in need of assistance.

6.4 Have your say

Council is committed to engaging the community in our decision making processes. To find out more about how you can have your say, please visit our [website](http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au) – www.loddon.vic.gov.au.

6.5 Our service and standards

How you can contact us	Our response
<p>Visit in person Monday to Friday: Wedderburn – 41 High Street 8.15am to 4.45pm Serpentine – 37 Peppercorn Way 8.30am to 5.00pm Shire Offices are closed public holidays Loddon Visitor Information Centre – Wilson Street Wedderburn Monday to Saturday 9.00am to 5.00pm Sunday and Public Holidays 10am to 4pm Closed Good Friday, Anzac Day and Christmas.</p>	<p>When visiting any of our Centres or buildings, we will greet you in a timely manner and attend to your query promptly. Appointments are recommended if you wish to meet with a particular person or department. Appointment times will be kept.</p>
<p>Telephone requests to Customer Service during open hours: (03) 5494 1200 8.15am to 4.45pm Monday to Friday</p>	<p>All telephone calls to Customer Service will be answered promptly within our published call response targets. Callers will be greeted by Council Customer Service staff clearly identifying themselves. Telephone messages to Customer Service will be returned the same business day.</p>
<p>Telephone requests direct to individual departments or Council officers</p>	<p>Callers will be greeted by Council staff clearly identifying themselves and their service area. Where possible, calls will be answered within 30 seconds. If calls are not able to be answered, telephone messages will be returned within two business days. Where the staff member is on leave, arrangements will be made to ensure that the timeframes stated above will be adhered to.</p>
<p>After hours telephone requests to Customer Service: (03) 5494 1200</p>	<p>We provide a 24 hour telephone service for after-hours requests where a situation is dangerous or requires urgent attention. A Council officer will respond to urgent matters immediately. Where messages are left for non-urgent matters, these will be processed by Customer Service and allocated to the appropriate department on the following business day.</p>

<p>Council main email: loddon@loddon.vic.gov.au</p> <p>Council website: www.loddon.vic.gov.au</p>	<p>When you send an email to our main address or via our website, we will let you know we have received your request and provide you with an automatic acknowledgement and receipt.</p> <p>Where a response has been requested, a Council officer will issue a response within three business days of receiving your request to provide you with a personalised acknowledgement including contact information and timeframe for resolution.</p>
<p>Emails to individual departments or Council officers</p> <p>Mail (eg. Australia Post) PO Box 21, Wedderburn VIC 3518</p>	<p>Where a response has been requested, a Council officer will issue a response within three business days of receiving your request to provide you with a personalised acknowledgement including contact information and timeframe for resolution.</p>

At times, Council is required to attend to situations that require urgent attention and these will be handled as a priority. Response timeframes for general enquires or less urgent matters may be affected. Examples include and are not limited to natural disaster or severe weather events.

6.6 Payment methods available

Method	How
Website	Council's secure payments using Visa or Mastercard
Shire Offices	EFTPOS by phoning 54 94 1200 In person via cash, cheque, credit card or EFTPOS
Australia Post	In person at any Post Office By phoning 131 816 Online at Australia Post Billpay Billpay card – contact Council for further information
BPAY	Online or phone banking facility through bank, credit union or building society from your cheque, credit or savings account.
Direct Debit	Via instalments from your bank account – contact Council for further information
Mail	PO Box 21 Wedderburn VIC 3518
Approved agencies	In person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boort - Boort Resource and Information Centre, 119 Godfrey Street ○ Bridgewater - Post Office, 4 Main Street ○ Dingee - General Store, 18 Mack Street ○ Dunolly - Rural Transaction Centre, 109 Broadway ○ Inglewood - Bendigo Bank, 64 Brooke Street ○ Mitiamo - General Store, 5 Joffre Street ○ Pyramid Hill - Newsagency and Post Office, 12-14 Kelly Street ○ Tarnagulla - Post Office, 101 Commercial Road

6.7 Complaints

Council is committed to service excellence and recognises a customer's right to make a complaint. Complaints give Council vital information about its services and a valuable opportunity to address any issues and identify any areas of service that need improvement.

The Complaint Handling Framework outlines Council's commitment to providing a fair and consistent process for customers making a complaint, and is available on our [website](http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au) (www.loddon.vic.gov.au) or we can send you a copy upon request.

Council also welcomes compliments and comments.

6.8 Privacy

Council respects and protects the integrity, confidentiality and privacy of information. Unless required to do so by law, we will keep your personal information confidential and not disclose it without your consent.

7 ACTION PLAN

This Strategy provides Loddon Shire with a framework for customer service delivery. A number of strategic directions have been developed and under each there are a range of actions.

Strategic direction	Actions
<p>1. Provide customer service that is accessible and flexible enough to meet the changing needs of our community</p>	<p>1.1. Investigate the introduction of a regular rotation of in-person customer service and other Council staff to areas across the Shire, including attendance at neighbourhood / community houses, and listening posts at events.</p> <p>1.2. Have customer service request software systems or paper forms available to enable mobile staff the ability to lodge requests for service on behalf of community members.</p> <p>1.3. Explore partnerships with agencies, post offices, senior citizens centres and other key groups in townships to keep Council customer request forms and reply-paid envelopes.</p> <p>1.4. Develop and implement interactive 'smart' online forms.</p> <p>1.5. Investigate the ability for customers to have virtual / online appointments with departmental staff.</p> <p>1.6. Investigate the use of a mobile phone number for community members to raise requests via text message.</p> <p>1.7. Implement integration of a smart phone app to enable customers to lodge requests into Council's Customer Request System.</p> <p>1.8. Investigate the introduction of webchat functionality.</p>
<p>2. Communicate and engage effectively with our community</p>	<p>2.1 Develop and maintain a welcome pack for new residents to Loddon Shire. Provide this both online and in hard copy at strategic locations across the Shire.</p> <p>2.2 Promote to the community the various customer service channels available, including online functionality.</p> <p>2.3 Establish an annual community engagement review program to determine and validate satisfaction levels with services offered and future needs and expectations.</p> <p>2.4 Review and continue to improve the way in which we communicate and engage with our committees of</p>

Strategic direction	Actions
	<p>management and volunteers.</p> <p>2.5 Redevelop Council's website in consultation with the community - so that Council information is easier to find, and links to related non-Council information are included.</p> <p>2.6 Through redevelopment of the Social Media Strategy, streamline processes for social media posting and investigate the feasibility - including resourcing implications - of enabling the ability for customers to provide interactive two-way feedback on social media.</p> <p>2.7 Introduce automatic acknowledgement of customer requests via email or SMS into the Customer Request System.</p> <p>2.8 Establish a process to promote customer service success stories to the community.</p>
<p>3. Allocate customer service resources to the areas of most need</p>	<p>3.1 Provide overflow and relief support for the Customer Service Officer at Wedderburn by relocating nominated 'back office' staff to the front counter area.</p> <p>3.2 Consider allocating additional administrative resources in departmental areas to assist with responding to customer requests and enquiries.</p> <p>3.3 Explore opportunities to link in with the Loddon Visitor Information Centre to provide additional support.</p>
<p>4. Improve our responsiveness and monitor our performance</p>	<p>4.1 Refine and agree upon mandatory organisational customer service standards and response times - and implement systems to measure performance.</p> <p>4.2 Develop departmental Service Level Agreements (SLA) and implement systems to measure performance, particularly around following up customer requests.</p> <p>4.3 As part of Council's information technology reforms, ensure the ability to collect and analyse the right data to enable better identification of improvement opportunities in the future.</p>
<p>5. Develop an organisation-wide approach and training for customer service delivery</p>	<p>5.1. Develop organisational protocols for customer service delivery including voicemail, departmental staff availability for customer enquiries and backfilling of responsibilities.</p> <p>5.2. Develop agreed organisational protocols to enable consistent lodgement of requests, and to ensure that all requests are captured in the Customer Request System.</p> <p>5.3. Develop both an organisational customer service training program and specific program for new customer service team members as part of Council's induction program.</p> <p>5.4. Review and refine communication processes for providing the Customer Service Team with current departmental information.</p>
<p>6. Review and streamline our processes</p>	<p>6.1. Develop customer service scripts for high volume enquiry types to enhance the ability for Customer Service to respond to basic enquiries at first point of contact.</p> <p>6.2. Review and streamline internal processes in Council departments where the most common customer request</p>

Strategic direction	Actions
	<p>types are received. This may include initially rates, building and planning, roads, animal management, garbage service and trees.</p> <p>6.3. Continue with the program of ongoing service delivery reviews across Council.</p> <p>6.4. Review the current agency arrangements to ensure ongoing efficiency and feasibility of the services delivered.</p>
<p>7. Provide Council staff with the tools required to deliver effective customer service delivery</p>	<p>7.1. Redevelop and maintain an up to date intranet / knowledge base available for all staff that provides clarity on roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>7.2. Improve external and internal service delivery by implementing the new website, intranet, phone system and corporate system - as identified in the Information Technology Strategy 2017-2022.</p> <p>7.3. Develop a costed four year roll out plan of actions identified and report progress to Council on a regular basis.</p>

8 REVIEW OF STRATEGY

The Customer Service Strategy will be reviewed with results made available to our customers. A new document will be completed on or before 31 December 2022.