



# CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2022-2026

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Golden Plains Shire spans the Traditional lands of the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar people. We Acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners and Custodians.

Council pays its respects to Wadawurrung Elders past, present and emerging. Council also respects Eastern Maar Elders past, present and emerging.

Council extends that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of the Golden Plains Shire.

*Artwork: by Shu Brown*



# 1. MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



**On behalf of Golden Plains Shire Council, I'm proud to introduce the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026.**

When the Council term began in 2021, the organisation and Councillor group embarked on the development of the Council Plan 2021-2025. Through the community consultation on the Golden Plains Community Vision 2040 and further engagement while developing the Council Plan, one area identified as needing improvement across the organisation was customer service.

In the Council Plan 2021-2025, we made a commitment to review

Council's customer service practices and develop a new strategy with the goal of delivering a clear, positive service experience for all customers – residents, ratepayers, businesses, visitors and community stakeholders.

The Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026 meets this strategic commitment – and starts the important journey to implement a fresh, inclusive approach to customer service at Golden Plains Shire Council.

To ensure a comprehensive and consistent experience for all customers, the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026 extends the service focus across the whole organisation with all staff, teams, management and Councillors responsible for quality customer experiences at Council.

With support across all levels of organisational leadership and the adoption by Golden Plains Shire Councillors, the Customer

Experience Strategy features a range of actions that will be implemented over the next four years. The Strategy will guide the review of actions, with the flexibility to adapt new measures to deliver the central commitment of improving resident and council interactions.

The Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026 is a robust, innovative strategic plan that has been developed in consultation with our communities to ensure the strongest commitment to our customers.

It details an exciting new chapter in Council's relationship with our community members and will place Golden Plains Shire Council as a leader in local government customer experience.

**Cr Gavin Gamble**

Mayor of Golden Plains Shire Council  
2021/22



# 2. INTRODUCTION

Golden Plains Shire Council (Council) is proud to provide support to the Shire’s residents and communities across a wide range of services. Council is a service-based organisation and its **primary purpose is to serve its customers**. That is why it is vital that Council staff are committed to offering exceptional service and a positive experience to all customers consistently.

## 2.1 Overview of Strategy

Council believes that the experience customers have when engaging with Council goes far beyond the initial interactions with our dedicated Customer Service Team. Rather, Council recognises that **all Council employees have a role to play in providing an exceptional customer experience**. Therefore, the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026 (Strategy) focuses on the overall experience of its customers, not just specific moments of customer service.

Moving away from the traditional mindset of ‘customer service’ ensures Council empowers its employees, across its many and varied teams including maintenance, management, community

services, customer service and corporate services, to deliver ‘wow’ experiences to customers.

**Council is committed to uplifting the customer experience across the whole organisation, and the Strategy will support this vision with:**

- A clear outline of what Council’s customers expect and value when interacting with staff and the organisation;
- Customer-focussed commitments that will help empower all Council employees to improve customer experiences; and
- A clear action plan that will address current state challenges and help Council meet its goals for customer experience.

## 2.2 The Importance of the Strategy

A key component in the Council Plan 2021-2025 is to: **‘improve the customer experience and build commitment and accountability to service standards and timely responsiveness.’**

The Strategy will give Council an overarching philosophy as well as an explicit action plan to improve the way Council’s customers are served. The central aim of the Strategy is to strengthen consistency and ensure staff are all ‘on the same page’ when it comes to the experiences delivered to customers.

### WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Customer service refers to a single touchpoint between customers and their first point of contact with Council. This interaction may be transactional or a bridge to different avenues in Council.

Customer service is reactive and usually driven by issues with services. It is a key piece of the customer’s experience but not the only part.

### WHAT IS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?

Customer experience encompasses the whole customer journey. Customer experience is proactive - from the moment that the need for Council’s service is identified, right through to the delivery of the service.



## 3. THE ROLE OF COUNCIL

Council delivers more than 60 valuable services to the communities of Golden Plains Shire including maternal and child health care, recreation, wellbeing and youth programs, statutory and strategic planning, community safety and roads management. Council's role is in partnership with community stakeholders, local networks, and the Victorian and Australian Governments.

Council takes pride in its role supporting and leading the community:

- Council **provides** services that meet the needs and expectations of the Golden Plains community.
- Council **advocates** on behalf of community needs to other levels of Government.
- Council **facilitates** the delivery of outcomes by working in partnership with residents, businesses, community organisations and key stakeholders.
- Council is a **Statutory Authority** under Victorian law to ensure compliance and delivery of services through legislated responsibility.

# 4. THE CUSTOMERS OF COUNCIL

Council delivers a wide variety of services to the Golden Plains community and connects with many people in many different ways.

Customer experience encompasses the interactions with residents, businesses, internal stakeholders, families, clients and community groups, other areas of government.

The Strategy has been developed with all customers in mind so that Council will offer a consistent customer experience across the whole organisation.

## 4.1 GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE AT A GLANCE Stats are as of 30 June 2021



**24,249**  
people



**56**  
communities



**2,705**  
sqkm of land



**16**  
townships



## 4.2 THE CUSTOMERS OF COUNCIL



**941**

**MATERNAL  
CHILD HEALTH**  
children accessing  
the service

**74**



**FOOD SAFETY  
ASSESSMENTS  
COMPLETED**



**1.8M**  
**IMPRESSIONS**

from 2,878 posts on Council's  
social media pages

**422**

**NEW PLANNING  
PERMITS ISSUED**

The development value for  
these projects is more than

**\$56.3M**



**52,867**

enquiries actioned by Council's  
Customer Service Team

**192**



**CHILDREN ENROLLED**

in Council three-and four-year-old  
kindergarten programs

**515,315**

**VIEWS OF COUNCIL'S WEBSITE**  
goldenplains.vic.gov.au



**3,237**

**COMMUNITY  
SAFETY ENQUIRIES**

received by the Council's Community  
Protection team



**22,000+**

**HOURS OF CONSUMER  
SUPPORT SERVICES**

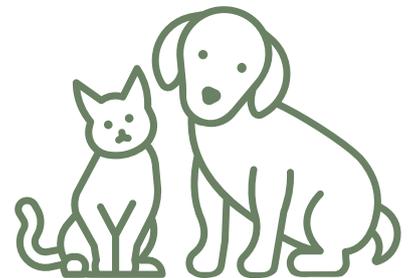
provided by Active Ageing & Inclusion Services



**46,559** **LIBRARY  
LOANS**

**2,307**

**YOUNG PEOPLE**  
participated in youth programs



**1,939**

**ANIMAL MANAGEMENT REQUESTS**



### 4.3 CUSTOMER TRENDS & INSIGHTS

From January 2019 to December 2021, Council collected and collated data from interactions with its Customer Service team to better understand key trends and insights into the method and motivation for customer contact. This data has informed the focus and direction of the Strategy.

Over the past 3 years, customers have contacted Council

# 161,100+ TIMES

Top reasons customers contacted Council:



**STATUTORY  
& STRATEGIC  
PLANNING**



**WASTE &  
RESOURCE  
RECOVERY**



**BUILDING  
SERVICES**



**COMMUNITY  
SAFETY**



**RATES**



**ROADS**

*“Your front line customer service officers are great. The problem is no subject matter experts are ever available to discuss an issue. Messages are left for call backs, but it appears the onus is on the customer to call back multiple times before anyone makes contact, let alone actions the issue.” Council Customer, Inverleigh*

How customers contacted Council:



**DIGITAL**

	2019	2020	2021
DIGITAL	8,892	13,222	13,619
IN PERSON	11,211	5,411	7,342
PHONE	29,196	36,314	33,726



**IN PERSON**



**PHONE**

Customer visits  
to Council Office:

# 15,828

**BANNOCKBURN**

# 6,076

**SMYTHESDALE**



# 5. CUSTOMER AND EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Council believes taking a data-driven approach is vital to the success of the Strategy and will ensure Council continues to listen to its customers. This will empower Council to implement impactful changes that will enhance the overall customer experience.

In the development of the Strategy, customers and employees shared their insight and feedback on the current state of customer experience. This feedback was captured through the following methods:

## Customer Surveys

Council asked customers to share:

1. Their expectations when interacting with Council
2. Challenges they may have faced when engaging with Council previously
3. Their preferred methods and channels of communication with Council

## Employee Workshops and Interviews

Council asked its employees to share:

1. What they think exceptional customer experience looks like
2. Barriers and challenges they face when delivering exceptional customer experience
3. Opportunities they see for the future of customer experience at the Council



## 5.1 VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC)

Council received 85 responses from customers to the two Customer Surveys. Responses were received from community members of many different ages, from all 16 towns across the Shire.

Overall, survey respondents detailed three priorities when interacting with Council:



Additional customer experience expectations from the survey respondents included:

### **Simple application forms and processes**

Customers told us that current application forms and processes are confusing and time consuming.

### **Consistent experience**

Customers expect to receive the same level of service regardless of who they speak to at Council.

### **Easy to understand and accessible information**

Customers want information that is easy to digest and answers their question. Remove the government jargon and talk straight.

### **Timely and transparent responses**

Customers want to be kept in the loop on their request and expect honest updates on its progress.

### **Deliver on promises**

Once a commitment has been made to a customer, they expect Council to deliver on it.

### **Connect with the right team**

Customers expect to be connected with the right team to help with their issue in the first interaction.

*“My complaint has fallen on deaf ears. Still waiting for resolution and phone calls back.”  
Council Customer, Dereel*

*“First interaction with Smythesdale Customer Service Centre was easy and pleasant. After that... \*\*crickets\*\*.” Council Customer, Linton*

*“This was a great experience and the officer went out of his way to offer to take my payment over the phone. One less thing for me to do later.” Council Customer, Bannockburn*

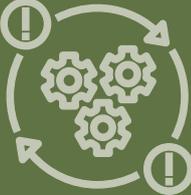
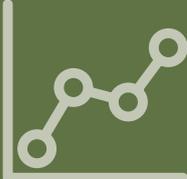


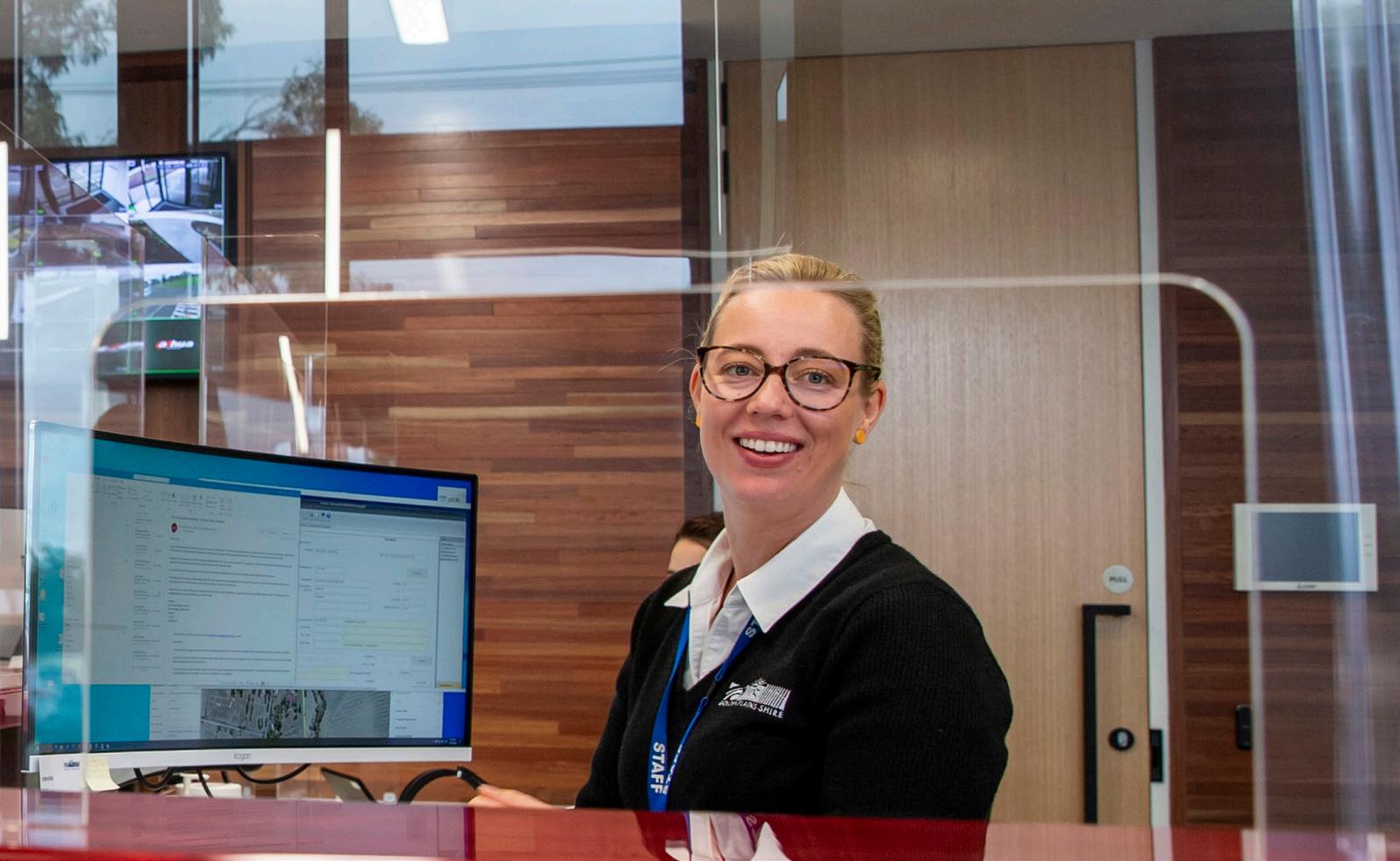
*“There is a perception that customer service responsibilities are primarily related to the customer services team - the language names associated does not help. We need to make it easy to distinguish from customer service roles and responsibilities across the organisation and those of the customer service team.” Council Employee*

## 5.2 VOICE OF THE EMPLOYEE (VOE)

For the strategy, 40 Council employees from 24 different teams shared their insight on customer experience and ideas for the future.

The employee insights and opportunities are outlined below:

 <h3>1. OPERATIONAL HURDLES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing the customer-focus in how we prioritise resources and make decisions will have a positive effect.</li><li>• The roles and responsibilities of different teams are unclear, making it difficult to hold teams accountable for their actions when interacting with customers.</li><li>• Complex processes and unclear timeframes result in confusion between teams and who owns which part of the customer experience.</li></ul>	 <h3>2. STRATEGIC INCONSISTENCIES</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make improvements in collaboration across departments to improve customer outcomes.</li><li>• Improve knowledge management practices and communication- that is, staff don't share information well currently.</li></ul>
 <h3>3. CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited training and awareness on the importance and benefits of delivering an exceptional customer experience.</li><li>• Traditional customer service model often encourages the outdated perspective that customer experience is only the responsibility of customer service officers. This can be a difficult mindset to shift.</li></ul>	 <h3>4. APPETITE FOR CHANGE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Despite challenges, Council employees are eager to improve the experience for all customers when interacting with Council.</li><li>• Senior Leadership recognise there is progress to be made when it comes to customer experience at Golden Plains Shire.</li><li>• There is a strong appetite for change and positive steps are being made to make customer experience a high priority for Council.</li></ul>



## 6. COUNCIL'S CUSTOMER PROMISE

“Council is committed to making its customers feel proud to be a part of Golden Plains Shire by designing and delivering excellent customer experience, every day.”

As mentioned in the introduction, a key component of the Council Plan 2021-2025 is to: ‘improve the customer experience and build commitment and accountability to service standards and timely responsiveness.’ Council believes it is important that the commitment made to customers in the Strategy align with the broader Council Plan and further reflects the Vision and Values of the organisation.



**VISION & VALUES**

Where people matter  
Communities are connected  
And the future is bright

**PRIDE RESPECT INTEGRITY COLLABORATION EXCELLENCE**

## 6.1 THE COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMERS



### MAKE IT EASY

Provide a simple and seamless experience that ensures good customer outcomes

Examples of what this may look like:

- Straight-through processes
- Clear forms
- Limited wait times and quick responses
- Clear points of contact
- Proactive service
- Ability to connect with Council via customer's preferred channels

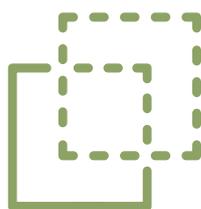


### MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

Listen with empathy and demonstrate genuine care for customers at all times

Examples of what this may look like:

- Active listening and compassion for customer requests
- Going the extra step to deliver exceptional service
- Always closing the loop and providing timely responses
- Learning from customers and capturing their feedback
- Striving to continuously improve



### MAKE IT TRANSPARENT

Be honest in every interaction and keep customers informed throughout the journey

Examples of what this may look like:

- Providing regular and timely updates
- Setting realistic expectations and timeframes
- Be upfront about any issues or challenges



### MAKE IT CONSISTENT

Ensure a consistent experience regardless of who a customer is interacting with at Council

Examples of what this may look like:

- Consistent information and approach between different teams
- Clearly outlined roles and responsibilities across the Council
- Consistent points of contact
- Consistent timelines
- Single source of truth for customer data



### MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

Meet customers where they're at and empower them to interact with Council

Examples of what this may look like:

- Online payments
- Digital self-service platform
- Digital forms
- Web content that meets accessibility guidelines
- No physical barriers at Customer Service Centres
- Alternative communication methods and formats
- Identify & develop new customer channels



*“I know people are busy, but I just want answers. My questions are important.”*

*Council Customer, Bannockburn*

# 7. ACTION PLAN

The Strategy is designed to be a living document with a commitment that will be embedded in Council’s practices and actions.

While it includes a vision and an overarching philosophy, it also incorporates specific actions to improve the way we interact with customers. The broad aim of the Strategy is to make every team and employee at Council more customer-focused while strengthening its commitment to a customer-first organisation.

The Action Plan published below sets out a program of work that will help Council deliver its customer promise and commitments. While it includes timeframes for important initiatives, it also encourages Council to trial new ideas and adopt a test and learn approach. The Action Plan will help employees and the organisation stay on track and will also allow room for creativity and imagination.

## 7.1 FOCUS AREA 1 - AWARENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

#	Initiative	Brief description	Timeline
1	<b>"Who's driving this?"</b> Customer Experience Champions Working Group	Council will appoint Customer Experience (CX) Champions across the organisation to form a self-organising working group to champion the adoption and implementation of the Strategy and key initiatives, as well as other customer experience opportunities.	Year 1
2	<b>"How will Council know if it's on the right track?"</b> Customer experience measures and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Council will develop a customer experience measurement framework and KPI action plan to ensure it is accountable for delivering excellent experiences.	Year 1
3	<b>"How will Council make sure customer experience isn't forgotten?"</b> Embed customer experience principles into existing processes	Council will investigate ways to include customer experience principles at all levels and areas of the organisation through its policies, procedures and processes.	Year 2
4	<b>"How will Council know what customers want?"</b> Regular customer feedback	Council will make it easier for customers to give feedback on their experiences, which may be qualitative or quantitative data. Council will listen and commit to acting on this feedback.	Year 1
5	<b>"How will Council know if the Strategy is working?"</b> Annual review of the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026	Council will ensure its delivering on the Strategy by conducting annual reviews of progress on the Action Plan.	Year 2

## 7.2 FOCUS AREA 2 - COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

#	Initiative	Brief description	When we'll start
6	<b>"Who's doing what?"</b>	Council will clearly define the different roles and responsibilities of all teams across the organisation to ensure clear visibility of each team's scope of work and the role they play in the customer journey. This will help ensure customers are connected with the right person.	Year 1
	Roles and responsibilities		
7	<b>"What's everyone else working on at the moment?"</b>	Council will establish a regular communication between leaders across the organisation, to share their current work focus, any challenges, upcoming events, and any other updates from their team that may impact customers when interacting with Council.	Year 1
	Regular leadership touchpoints		

## 7.3 FOCUS AREA 3 - CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

#	Initiative	Brief description	When we'll start
8	<b>"How long will this take?"</b>	Council will ensure realistic expectations are set for customers by having clearly defined SLAs across the business as well as appropriate resourcing to ensure we meet these SLAs.	Year 1
	Define Service-Level Agreements (SLAs)		
9	<b>"Who should customers contact?"</b>	Council will provide a single first point of contact for all enquiries to Council which can then be seamlessly diverted to the correct team.	Year 2
	Single point of contact for customers		
10	<b>"How else can we make customers' lives easier?"</b>	Council will adopt a continuous improvement mindset and regularly review its internal processes as well as customer-facing items, to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience.	Year 2
	Continuous improvements		
11	<b>"What's the single source of truth?"</b>	Council will implement customer-centric software that gives the organisation a single source of truth for customer interactions and data.	Year 1
	Customer-centric Customer Relationship Management (CRM)		

## 7.4 PRIORITIES FOR YEAR 1 (2022/2023)

#	Focus Area	Initiative	Key Activities
1	<b>Awareness and Accountability of Customer Experience</b>	Customer Experience Champions Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up working group</li> <li>• Ask for volunteers and/or nominations to be Champions</li> <li>• Establish mandate, goals and ways of working</li> </ul>
2	<b>Awareness and Accountability of Customer Experience</b>	Customer experience measures & KPIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate customer experience measurement frameworks (e.g. Net Promoter Score, Customer Effort Score)</li> <li>• Draft Customer Experience KPI Action Plan</li> </ul>
3	<b>Awareness and Accountability of Customer Experience</b>	Regular customer feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate additional ways to capture customer feedback</li> <li>• Implement one or two new initiatives to capture customer feedback (e.g. suggestion box at Customer Service Centres)</li> </ul>
4	<b>Awareness and Accountability of Customer Experience</b>	Annual review of the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desktop review in May 2023</li> </ul>
5	<b>Collaborative Approach to Customer Experience</b>	Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify roles and responsibilities for each department and how that impacts the customer journey</li> </ul>
6	<b>Collaborative Approach to Customer Experience</b>	Regular leadership touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial monthly leadership meetings focused on customer experience, to be led by the Customer Experience Champions</li> </ul>
7	<b>Customer-Centric Systems and Processes</b>	Customer-centric Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map all CRM processes</li> </ul>
8	<b>Customer-Centric Systems and Processes</b>	Define Service-Level Agreements (SLAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct audit the services that do or do not have SLAs</li> </ul>

# 8. COUNCIL'S PROMISE TO EVALUATE THE STRATEGY

Council understands that actions speak louder than words, which is why it is committed to regularly reviewing the progress and outcomes of the Strategy.

Monitoring and evaluating the Strategy will ensure staff and the organisation stay on track to achieve its customer experience goals and deliver on its customer promise. The Strategy is a living document and will be adjusted to ensure it remains contemporary and achieves Council's ongoing vision for customer experience.

Examples of how Council will review the success of the Strategy include:

- Quarterly Council Plan Reporting
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Implementation of the Action Plan and introduction of Customer Experience measurable KPIs
- Yearly reviews of Action Plan to track progress and appropriately adjust plan for the year ahead







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#### CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS

Bannockburn Customer Service Centre  
8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

The Well, Smythesdale  
8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

 @GPSCouncilNews

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