



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 - Action Plan

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To introduce the Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 and subsequent action plan which will be presented to this committee every six months to ensure a commitment to supporting the delivery of the customer charter, priorities, and approach to customer experience across Council services.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the report and provide feedback on the information contained in the report.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are currently no direct budget implications associated in adopting this Strategy. Any future initiatives resulting in budgeting implications will be, in the first instance, managed within existing service area budgets. Where additional funding is required, this will be requested formally, taking the appropriate action.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The implementation of the Strategy complies with all relevant regulations. Data protection measures will align with UK GDPR and Information Governance standards.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.3 The risk of the Strategy not driving change at a pace that matches the ambition of South Kesteven District Council will be mitigated through managed delivery and oversight of the Customer Experience Working Group, Senior Management and the Committee.
- 1.4 Digital inclusion – Digital literacy training via FAQs and help pages, accessible technology, and face to face support using self-serve desks in our Customer Service Centres.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.5 The Customer Experience Strategy has been developed to ensure services are provided equitably and the diversity of our customers is recognised, respected and valued.

- 1.6 The action plan will take a data driven approach to understand the needs of the Council's customers and equip employees with relevant training. The plan also sets out to better understand the various channels different groups need to access our services. The plan also explores where the Council can automate in some areas to allow more time for complex matters that require in person or telephone interaction with customer, so no one is digitally excluded.

Completed by: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

Human Resources

- 1.7 The strategy has been created in line with the People Strategy and has referenced several key areas where training and development will be needed. The HR team will work closely with the appropriate people to ensure any learning that is required and applicable in this Strategy will be carried out.

Completed by: Sam Fitt, Senior Human Resources Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The report presents the refreshed Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029 and associated action plan. The Council has made good progress over the last four years, since the implementation of the first Strategy, during which the Council faced challenges to customer contact as a result of Covid. The Council has invested significantly in a number of areas to improve its approach to customer service, such as with the development of the new website, the new Customer Service Centre in Grantham and online forms and portals.
- 2.2. The new Strategy was presented to Cabinet on 7 October 2025 and is included as **Appendix One**. The Strategy is intended to provide a framework for the continued development of the Council's customer focus in the coming years. The Strategy sets out the Council's plans to achieve its vision to improve the customer experience as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of its services. The Council will do this by providing excellent customer service, to all our customers (residents, businesses, partners, visitors and community groups), working with them to ensure that its services meet their needs and are inclusive and accessible for all.
- 2.3. The Strategy aligns with the Council commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to being an Effective Council. This report, and the adoption of the Customer Experience Strategy strives to deliver this priority. The Council ensures its services are digitally enabled and efficient to meet the expectations of this district's changing communities whilst not excluding those who are not yet digitally enabled. The

Strategy will also ensure that Council staff have the skills needed to drive the organisation forward to meet the changing expectations of our customers.

- 2.4. For the purpose of this Strategy, “customers” is used generically to describe residents, businesses, people who work in or visit the area, community groups, charities and partners working with the Council.

Customer Experience Steering Group

- 2.5. The Strategy has been developed with insight and support from all front-facing service areas, including IT (Digital Strategy) and HR (People Strategy). In Spring 2024, a Customer Experience Steering Group was established. This group consisted of a staff representative from each of the service areas.
- 2.6. The group was formed to ensure collaborative working on the Grantham Customer Service Centre, as well as the development of the Customer Experience consultation and subsequent Strategy.
- 2.7. The individuals in the group have now become Customer Experience champions for their service area. They will embed the Strategy within their teams, supporting the launch during National Customer Service Week (6 to 10 October 2025). They will ensure team members understand their responsibilities in delivering the actions within the customer charter, achieving the service standards and fulfilling the priorities – with the ultimate aim of ensuring the customer is at the heart of everything we do.

Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2029

- 2.8. The Council and Customer Service Team believe our customers should be at the heart of all we do. Knowing our customers, getting feedback, taking this on board to improve services and moving forward with technology is vital in building a forward-looking Customer Experience Strategy.
- 2.9. Attached at Appendix A is the Strategy which provides a single corporate document that outlines the Council’s vision and ensures point of reference, accountability and governance to a Council-wide approach to customer experience.
- 2.10. The Strategy sets out the vision, priorities and approach for delivering an efficient and effective customer experience across the Council, working together to ensure consistency.
- 2.11. In implementing this Strategy, **our core priorities** are as follows (these are expanded on within the full Strategy document):

- Priority 1: Our commitment to a customer first ethos
- Priority 2: Access to multiple service channels
- Priority 3: Accessibility and Inclusion
- Priority 4: Regular staff training
- Priority 5: Technology

- 2.12. The Strategy also sets out the **Customer Charter** which defines the Council's responsibility to our customers, as well as what we would like from our customers. These responsibilities are linked to the priorities. The charter has been developed as a direct result of the consultation and they set out the Council's promise as to how we will deliver high quality services whilst enabling us to meet our customers' expectations.
- 2.13. **Service Standards** featured within the feedback to the consultation, with customers asking the Council to introduce these – for the corporate contact centre and each of its service areas. The Strategy includes both operational standards and performance indicators.
- 2.14. This Strategy enables the Council to move away from 'customer services' being seen as the responsibility of a single team or department. Instead, it recognises the importance of 'Customer Service' as a culture for the whole organisation to implement, embed and achieve the overall goal to connect all objectives with the five priorities to improve customer experience and operational efficiency.
- 2.15. The Strategy ensures all services and staff provide an effective and positive customer experience who are aware of and understand their responsibilities in fulfilling the Customer Charter, Service Standards, Priorities and Vision to a high level.

Action Plan 2025 to 2029

- 2.16. An action plan has been developed which will support the Strategy and its priorities – this is detailed in **Appendix Two**.
- 2.17. The plan focusses on Year 1 (October 2025 to 31 March 2026) – which covers the 'Explore' activities. The activities for 2026/27 and beyond will move from Explore to Implement, with a new action plan being devised for this period. These activities will be appropriately linked to relevant Service Plans, staff appraisals and will detail financial implications of proposed actions.
- 2.18. The Customer Service Management Team will be responsible for the strategic direction of the action plan, collaborating with the Customer Experience Steering Group who will have oversight of the Strategy to enable effective co-ordination of delivery of the actions.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Improving customer experience is a key area of focus for South Kesteven District Council. A significant amount of work has taken place across all front-facing services who interact with customers within the District.
- 3.2. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure interactions with customers are of a consistently high standard and placing our customers at the heart of everything the Council does.
- 3.3. The Strategy also sets the direction for how Council employees will interact with customers, as well as emphasising the importance of the Council's values and behaviours.

4. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 4.1 The action plan forms part of the Strategy, which is an overarching document, developed by the Customer Service Management team, with the support of the Customer Experience Steering Group and engagement with customers and local stakeholders. It provides a framework, objectives and standards to further develop a consistent approach across Council services.
- 4.2 The action plan demonstrates a clear commitment to the activities required to achieve shared objectives across teams to improving the service and engagement with our 'customers'.
- 4.3 The recommendation is therefore made to ensure Members are aware of the development and intended implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy and it's action plan and to offer opportunity for feedback.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix One: Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029
- 5.2 Appendix Two: Customer Experience Strategy 2025 to 2029 – action plan