



Putting Customers First Strategy 2021-2024

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How we will be Putting Customers First

Putting Customers First is Maribyrnong City Council's commitment to achieving customer service excellence. The strategy will be delivered across three years, commencing in July 2021. The first year will focus on implementing the processes and strategies for future success. We will build year-on-year to become leaders in the customer experience space. *Putting Customers First* is a journey the whole organisation is embracing - it focuses on both external and internal customers. The action plan will be prepared annually and reported in the Annual Report. The strategy will be reviewed every three years.

About us

The City of Maribyrnong, part of the inner west, is transforming at a rapid rate. Our city is experiencing rapid growth and its reputation as a place to live, visit and work is burgeoning and we embrace this change.

It provides opportunities to draw on our extraordinary culture diversity, creativity and hardworking industrial roots to emerge as a drawcard location with a unique personality.

We have a relatively young population with a particularly large proportion of babies and young adults and our population is expected to grow from 93,448 to approximately 164,637 by 2051, a 76 per cent increase.

Such growth does present challenges. We have responded promptly to these - approving dwellings to help house future residents, creating more parks and sporting facilities in higher density areas, continuing the revitalization of Braybrook, rejuvenating the Footscray business precinct and advocating to enhance the amenity and liveability of the City.

Our continued growth results in a demand for active transport connection, increased learning and performing arts opportunities, investment in infrastructure to enable healthy lifestyle choices, revitalisation of housing options and the need to strategically invest in the City to create a sustainable future.

Putting Customers First is Council's strategy to embed Service Excellence across the organisation and ensure the customer experience is the very best it can be. It applies to all customers – external and internal.

Our customers include everyone who lives, works, plays, visits or does business in our City. They do this face to face at our Town Hall, our community centres and libraries; through calling our offices; online through our website, apps and social media; or by writing to us.



678 | 1,367

PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

NEW BUSINESSES REGISTERED



4,834.50

SQUARE METRES PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE PATHS INSTALLED



This year's
***highlights**

300K

VISITS TO COMMUNITY CENTRES

^1500

TREES PLANTED

36K

SQUARE METRES OF SEALED LOCAL ROADS RECONSTRUCTED

365K

VISITORS TO LIBRARIES

^200K

PEOPLE ATTENDED FESTIVAL CITY EVENTS

Note: Data is pre-COVID-19

Our commitment and guiding principles

We will understand your needs

Whether it is our online services, a phone call, social media, web chat or face-to-face, we pride ourselves on taking the time to understand our customers' needs and provide a smooth customer experience. This means we actively improve our services based on customer insights and provide fast and effective resolution to customer enquiries. We understand that some of our customers will experience hardship, and we have programs in place to support anyone facing vulnerability.

We will be easy to contact

We recognise the diversity of our customers and understand that multiple ways to access our services are required to suit their needs. This means giving our customers choice to contact us how they want and when they want, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We will make it easy to do business with us

We recognise our customers have busy lives. We want to make it easy to pay for and access services whether they are at home, at work, enjoying our parks and gardens or vibrant business district, community centres and libraries. We will ensure payment and registrations options whether digital, online, or face to face are smooth and easy to use and understand.

We will be reliable and equitable

Our community trusts us to provide reliable and consistent information. Residents can be confident that whatever language they speak, they can access reliable information. This will be provided equitably to people of all abilities.

We will be responsive

We will always respond to your requests and will do so in a timely manner.

Values

Respect

Inclusiveness, empathy, communication and goodwill.

- ensure our services are focused on your needs and enable you to easily access the organisation
 - ensure that our staff are skilled, resourced, well informed and motivated
 - respect the needs of others
 - treat our staff with courtesy and respect
 - support decisions and agreed positions made in the interests of the organisation and underpinned by the organisational values
 - communicate and reinforce expectations clearly, fairly and without prejudice
-

Integrity

Honesty, loyalty, ethical behaviour and trustworthiness.

- consult and receive feedback from you to ensure that we are focused on our customers' needs and preferences
 - support decisions and agreed positions made in the interests of the organisation and underpinned by the organisational values
 - communicate and reinforce expectations clearly, fairly and without prejudice
-

Courage

Innovation, considered risk, creativity, problem solving, initiative, accountability and responsibility.

- creative, innovative and open minded when approaching organisational and individual issues
 - encourage and expect our people to resolve issues, overcome challenges and be solution focused
 - responsive (considering options before we act), not reactive
 - question and clarify – don't act on hearsay and rumour
 - confront challenges in a constructive manner not avoid them
 - communicate and reinforce expectations clearly, fairly and without prejudice
-

Strategic Objectives

Safe climate and healthy environment

Council will proactively identify opportunities to support a return to a safe climate and healthy environment and work with our community to respond to climate emergency challenges.

Liveable neighbourhoods

Council will partner with its community to provide and advocate for integrated built and natural environments with access to open spaces that are well maintained, engaging, accessible and respectful of the community and neighbourhoods.

A place for all

Council will provide well-planned neighbourhoods and a strong local economy, delivering services that are inclusive and accessible to the whole community, and that support wellbeing, healthy and safe living, connection to the community, and cultural interaction.

Future focussed

Council will plan and advocate for new infrastructure and safe, sustainable and effective transport networks and a smart innovative city that encourages and supports new generations to thrive.

Ethical leadership

Council will proactively lead our changing City using strategic foresight, innovation, transparent decision-making and well-planned and effective collaboration and community engagement to support community and economic growth during the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and beyond.

What we heard

The Council Plan 2021-2025 (including the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan) was developed with extensive community engagement over 6 months and is used to inform the strategic directions of Council.

The community identified a number of key priorities through the Council Plan process including:

- plant more trees and create more open spaces
- improve the standard of roads, footpaths, nature strips
- improve waste management and recycling
- manage trucks on our roads and clean up air quality
- introduce minimum height and parking requirements for new builds
- encourage active transport through the provision of safe, well-connected wider and greener walking and cycling paths
- deliver more amenities and facilities – including pop-up parks and toilets in reserves
- play our role as global citizens in the climate emergency
- keep rates where they are – and reduce where possible

What we know

Council is committed to enhancing engagement with our community and has developed a new Community Engagement Policy in 2021. A new Maribyrnong Matters Community Panel was established in December 2020 (with 154 people involved) and Council is using a range of tools to engage – from the Your City Your Voice online engagement platform, to face to face consultations, surveys, submissions, interactive tools, webinars, social media and consultation over a number of stages (increasing participation from the outset of projects), with deliberative engagement a key focus.

Maribyrnong will continue to have a predominantly young population. However there will also be a segment of Maribyrnong's population that will have increasing healthcare and social support needs as they age in place. Maribyrnong will also continue to be a culturally diverse community.

Innovations in democracy are occurring globally and around Australia. For example, participatory budgeting has been adopted in some local governments allowing for citizen participation in the allocation of resources by local government. We have implemented an allocation tool online this year for the Proposed Budget 2021-22.

Communities are also undergoing significant change, posing greater needs for social integration with emerging communities that are young, culturally diverse and not necessarily affiliated with conventional religious or cultural networks.

What we can do

Information

- promote the use of digital technologies (as well as traditional tools) to disseminate objective information and enable timely feedback from local residents and service users
- ensure that information is available in community languages as needed
- continue to measure customer service satisfaction through the annual community survey, as well as through service-specific initiatives

Engagement

- lead fair and transparent consultation processes appropriate to the type of decision to be made, including those that relate to important infrastructure or service changes
- ensure deliberative engagement and ability for the community to shape decision-making from the beginning of projects
- use a wide variety of methods and tools, appropriate to the audience, to obtain public feedback on proposals
- work closely with local community groups that reflect or represent the needs of specific constituencies, to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are understood and considered
- promote and encourage participation in community engagement opportunities

Participation

- provide platforms for everyone to have a voice and representation on issues that affect them
- facilitate community participation to ensure that plans and programs are targeted to meet community needs
- promote flexible opportunities for volunteering and civic participation
- increase participation in community leadership programs
- build a sense of local identity and civic responsibility through encouraging community-owned spaces for reporting and discussion of local issues
- create public spaces and places that will support shared activities and information exchange

Our approach

At Maribyrnong City Council we aim to provide exceptional Customer Service, in every way. We've adopted five focus areas, designed to transform and enhance our customer experience. We are adapting every day to feedback from our customers, and learning all the time from companies that are leading in customer service. We don't just aim to meet our customers' expectations, we aim to exceed them. This strategy relates to both internal and external customers.

1. Listening to our customers

Engaging with and listening to our customers is our way of working. *Putting Customers First* strategy creates opportunities for our customers to provide their feedback to us in ways that suit them. Whether that's through an online portal, Facebook or telephone call or talking face-to-face with our staff at our customer service desk or a local festival. Our approach is to listen, learn and improve our services in little ways every day, and in big ways through our strategic effort.

We gain insights by capturing and analysing data from our Customers. Great customer experience requires us to turn data into useful insights for our customers.

We are also focusing our efforts to improve our communication. Our customers have told us they want more opportunities to self-serve as well as the chance to speak to us face-to-face. We are listening, now watch us grow as we broaden our community engagement and work with our customers to improve our services.

Actions

- Guided by our Council Plan, we will have regular and authentic conversations with our customers so they can tell us what they need in a way that suits them
- We will involve our customers in the design and re-design of the ways we interact with them

2. People, Process and Services working together

We are aware that we need to work on aligning our people processes and services. Our customers expect us to deliver on the promises we make. At Maribyrnong City Council we aim to create a positive experience for our customers even when things go wrong.

Our people learn every day new ways to deliver the best value for their customers. From accounts payable to the IT help desk, every person at Maribyrnong City Council takes personal responsibility for the customer experience and is supported behind the scenes with ever more streamlined processes.

Our customers expect to make payments and get information without even thinking about it. The *Putting Customers First* strategy is about delivering great quality services every day. There will always be times when things don't go as planned; and while there might be interruptions, these are opportunities for us to provide exceptional service.

Actions

- We will implement a new Customer Service Model that directs customer interactions to resolve enquiries promptly and correctly, first time
- All of our staff will be part of delivering our *Putting Customers First* vision; from those who work in libraries, to those who maintain our parks and gardens and everything in-between. Our customers can be confident we're working together to put them first.

3. Celebrating diversity

Our customers are diverse. We have one of the largest concentration of non-English speaking background people in Victoria– marked by the 70 different cultural groups that reside in our area with over 40% speaking a language other than English at home.

We not only celebrate but embrace our differences. We serve a wide spectrum of customers with diverse lifestyles and every one of these customers' needs us in different ways.

Our *Putting Customers First* strategy will see us truly understand our customers beyond the conventional segments of residential and business. Behaviour, values and needs vary significantly within these groups and influence customer expectations. Understanding our customers positions us to anticipate and address their needs and deliver the services they value.

The Intercultural Cities Framework will be the key driver of our performance in relation to diversity.

Our commitment is to create a leading accessible experience that meets our customers' individual needs.

Actions

- We will gain a better understanding of our customers' needs and expectations through ongoing feedback
- We will have improvement plans in place for each service that will see us provide service offerings that reflect their needs

4. Digitally enabled/connected

Our customers have spoken. Many want a better digital experience. This is vital for us. Our customers want services that allow them to transact seamlessly on any device, and to be provided efficiently with the information they need when they want it. We want to be accessible in every way possible for our customers.

It's hard to ignore the potential impact this will have on our cost to serve. A reduction in call volumes for simple transactions will enable us to focus on resolving more complex activities that deliver greater customer benefits and value.

A Smart City Strategy is being developed with a number of initiatives taking place to support the creation and growth of a vibrant, diverse and progressive city. Embracing new technology and collecting data to inform decision-making, will help us to improve the way we do things in the City of Maribyrnong.

Actions

- We will provide our customers with choice by putting our key customer interactions online
- We will introduce integrated systems that efficiently manage our customer interactions
- We will provide our customers with real time information on services and incidents

5. Continuous improvement culture

Our services are broad and complex. However it's our people that will put customers at the heart of all we do. Our people are our most important asset and the architects of customer value. Whether it is a Maternal and Child Health nurse, a gardener in our parks, or an accountant, we all have a role to play in delivering an exceptional customer experience.

Maribyrnong City Council has created a continuous improvement culture where success is measured by customer satisfaction. Our culture is built on three pillars:

- We value people
- We learn and grow
- We drive performance

Actions

- We are developing our leaders to embed customer first best practice
- Customer excellence will be a Key Performance Indicator required for all staff
- We will undertake a *Putting Customers First* learning and development program for all our people
- Our people know and care how their role contributes to the delivery of our *Putting Customers First* strategy

How you will know we are changing

The implementation of *Putting Customers First* will be measured through a robust framework of metrics that monitors our performance across approach. All of the metrics will drive outcomes in three key areas: Maribyrnong City Council's reputation, customer satisfaction and digital customer services.

Monitoring and evaluation

The delivery of the *Putting Customers First* strategy will be enabled by the development of an annual Action Plan. This will outline the accountabilities and timelines for implementing the key actions stated in this strategy. The Executive Management Team will be responsible for the development and management of the Action Plan and will coordinate the quarterly report to Council on the targets and key actions outlined in the *Putting Customers First* strategy. Actions will be reported in the Annual Report and the strategy will be reviewed every three years.

Our services

Services by Directorate

Community Services	Infrastructure Services	Corporate Services
City Futures Community Development, Positive Ageing Arts, Community Learning & Libraries Community Services & Social Infrastructure Planning	Regulatory Services Engineering Services Operations and Maintenance Assets and Capital Recreation and Open Space	Finance Information Technology Services People and Capability Customer Engagement Governance and Commercial Services City Places

Note: Major Projects and Strategic Relationships reports to the Office of the CEO and sits outside of this structure.

Action plan 2021-2022

1. Listening to our customers

Approach	Actions	Department
Guided by our Council Plan we will have regular and authentic conversations with our customers so they can tell us what they need in a way that suits them	Develop a Community Engagement Policy that outlines our approach to community engagement.	Customer Engagement
	Train staff to have an understanding of community engagement principles.	
	Use a variety of community engagement tools to ensure that range of options are available to community members.	
We will involve our customers in the co-design of the ways we interact with them	Use the community satisfaction survey to gain feedback on interactions with Council and demonstrate improvements in the following year.	All Departments
	Publish community satisfaction survey results on Council's website.	Customer Engagement
	Gain feedback on engagement methods as part of the consultation process.	

2. People, process and services working together

Approach	Actions	Department
We will implement a new Customer Service Model that directs customer interactions to resolve enquiries promptly and correctly, first time.	Provide training to relevant staff on the new model prior to implementation. KPIs developed to reflect outcomes for all staff involved.	Customer Engagement All Departments
All of our staff will be involved in delivering our Putting Customers First vision; from those who work in libraries to those who maintain our parks and gardens and everything in between. Our customers can be confident we're working together to put them first.	Train staff across Council on how to implement customer excellence across Council. Ensure communications both externally and internally are clear and contain expectations and levels of service outcomes.	People and Capability Customer Engagement All Departments
Develop a SMART shared software interface with our customers who attend/book into/use services at our facilities be they community hubs, libraries, early years, playgroups, leisure facilities, community development initiatives or seniors facilities.	Analyse how Council owned community facilities are used (who, purpose, frequency, time used). Report on income derived, and social dividend produced.	Arts, Community Learning and Libraries

3. Celebrating Diversity

Approach	Actions	Department
We will gain a better understanding of our customers' needs and expectations through ongoing feedback and will implement continuous improvement.	Regular opportunities for customer feedback provided at point of contact and electronically.	All Departments
	Feedback statistics provided to departments on a monthly basis.	
	Improvement plans developed and reported on as required.	
We will have improvement plans in place for each service that will see us provide service offerings and reflect their needs.	Service plans to contain Customer First improvement plans.	All Departments
	Report on progress and success of improvement plans at EMT.	

4. Digitally Enabled

Approach	Actions	Department
We will provide customers with choice by putting our key customer interactions online	Place all key customer interactions online.	All Departments
		ITS
		Customer Engagement
We will introduce integrated systems that efficiently manage our customer interactions	Implement integrated systems (TRIM bridge) to ensure customers have the most up to date documents and seamless experience.	All Departments
		ITS
		Customer Engagement
We will provide customers with real-time information on services and incidents	Implement real time via web/social media	All Departments
		ITS
		Customer Engagement
We will enhance digital engagement	Implement digital engagement and improve the online engagement portal	Customer Engagement

5. Continuous Improvement Culture

Approach	Actions	Department
We are developing leaders to embed Customer First Best Practice	Leadership Development Program for all council leaders to include customer first best practice component.	People and Capability All Departments
Customer Excellence will be a Key Performance Indicator for all staff	Customer Excellence will be a Key Performance Indicator to be included in individual performance review and development plans for all Council staff from 1 July 2021.	People and Capability
We will undertake a Putting Customers First learning and development program for all of our people	Develop and implement a Putting Customer First learning and development program by March 2022	People and Capability
Our people know and care how their role contributes to the delivery of our Putting Customer First Strategy	Putting Customer First strategy integrated with all staff policies and procedures.	People and Capability