OUTCOME OF PUBLIC EXHIBITION - CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2023-2025

ATTACHMENTS:	**1. IMPLICATIONS** **2. CX STRATEGY PUBLIC EXHIBITION ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES REPORT** **3. TRACKED CHANGED DRAFT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2023-2025X** **4. FINAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY**
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	**MAXINE KENYON – CUSTOMER & CORPORATE DIRECTOR**
AUTHOR:	**JO JEWITT – CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGER**
CITY STRATEGY OUTCOME:	**5.7 – DELIVER EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE**
MEETING DATE:	**26 APRIL 2023**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider consultation feedback following a period of public exhibition received between 9 February and 12 March 2023 and adopt the amended *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025*.

2. OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Adopt the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025,* as amended in Attachment 4.**

2. **Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025* that do not alter the intent.**

3. **Thank and advise all community engagement respondents for their contribution and of Council's decision.**

3. BACKGROUND

Our Future Willoughby 2032 sets out the community's long-term vision and priorities for the future of the City as its 10-year Community Strategic Plan (CSP). The CSP identifies the aspirations and priorities of the community for the future of the local government area. Outcome 5 contains a community priority to "5.7 Deliver excellent customer service".

Council's Community Perception Survey results in previous years indicate satisfaction as one of the highest when benchmarked against other councils and businesses. Even so, this independent research continues to inform Council on improvements and highlights that providing quality customer service is one of the highest drivers of overall satisfaction with Council.

Given this, Council identified as a priority, improvements in the experience of our customers, in both the *Delivery Program 2022-2026* and the *Operational Plan 2022/2023*. In response, the draft *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025* was developed to provide a framework and approach to how Council will continue to deliver improvements for our customers.

The draft *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025* was endorsed by Council for public exhibition in December 2022. This report provides the results of the public exhibition process for the draft *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025* (CX Strategy) and the final CX Strategy for Council's adoption.

4. DISCUSSION

The Draft CX Strategy was placed on public exhibition between 9 February and 12 March 2023, rather than in December when adopted for exhibition, to accommodate the holiday season and to allow for more thorough engagement to occur.

The *Community Engagement Policy and Strategy* was also adopted for exhibition, and given the synergies between the two strategies, both documents were exhibited together.

The public exhibition process aimed to test the draft CX Strategy and initiatives through:
1. Capturing broad community feedback on the draft CX strategy
2. Further refining Council's understanding of the community's preferred methods of communication and customer experience
3. Identifying customer priorities and possible emerging gaps in the draft directions within the CX Strategy.

The public exhibition process had a reach of more than 16,000 persons and was promoted through:
- An advertisement in the North Shore Times
- In Council newsletter
- Email sent to Have Your Say subscribers (7,000 reach)
- Correspondence to local Progress Associations and Chambers of Commerce
- Distribution of flyers at Council's Victor St office and at Chatswood, Naremburn and Artarmon centres (195 distributed)
- Promotion on the Council's social media channels (reach 9,151)
- Issuing a media release.

Consultation opportunities included the following, with 75 responses:
- Two face to face and one online consultation workshops (44 attended)
- In person business, visitor and community surveys (23 completed)
- Online surveys and written submissions (8 received).

Feedback received
The Engagement Outcomes Report (**Attachment 2**) provides detailed information regarding the consultation methodology and results.

Council received an overwhelming level of support for the draft CX Strategy and the prioritisation of improving customer experience in Willoughby. The feedback received has also confirmed the community's support for the initiatives and identified areas of importance and focus within the CX Strategy.

The key themes emerging from the consultation and how Council has responded to them is outlined in Figure 1 below. The Strategy and initiatives identified for action support addressing these themes.

Figure 1: Key Themes and Council Response

Key Themes from Public Exhibition	Council Response
1. Transparent and effective communication - Invest in improving and increasing the level of communication, particularly through the customer's preferred communication methods	Key initiatives of the CX Strategy will assist in better identifying preferred communication channels and regularity for each customer type; improving the type of information on our website and in other communication methods. This has also been referred to our Communications team.
2. Closing the loop - Focus on 'closing the loop' on customer enquiries to ensure that communication is two-way, consistent, responsive and continuous.	This is a current focus for staff and will improve through the implementation of the new customer request system; via continued training and support to staff across Council.
3. Eliminate Barriers – Make contacting Council and Council's processes more accessible, including third party access.	This is a current focus of staff and will continue with the CX Strategy initiatives, such as: improving forms on our website; self service for customers; and reviewing all processes to reduce red tape and improve ease of use for the customer.
4. Simplification of language – reduce the 'modern jargon' and utilise customer friendly language in the draft CX Strategy to minimise confusion.	Revisions have been made to simplify the wording within the document and a glossary of terms has been added. Some terms have been kept to align to standard industry practice and implementation within the Council. A one page simple summary will be provided.
5. Deliver pillars and initiatives - act on the foundations and directions laid out in the Strategy, for which there was broad support.	The Strategy identifies initiatives for the next two years, progress against these initiatives will be reporting within the existing mechanisms of the Operational Plan.
6. Business customer communication - Improve outbound communication to businesses as this cohort felt under serviced	This has been referred to our Economic Development and Communications team.

During the period of public exhibition, the results of the Community Perception Survey 2022 were also received. The results of this independent research further support our focus on customer experience and identify similar priority areas in the themes above and what has been identified in the CX Strategy.

The revised CX Strategy, with tracked changes, from the public exhibition version is attached (**Attachment 3**), the final version recommended for adoption is attached (**Attachment 4)**.

5. CONCLUSION

A positive customer experience is essential to any business, local government not being an exception. We recognise that although improvements have been made in recent years, there is more we can do to change the experience our customers have with all aspects of Council.

Council wants to put the customer at the heart of everything we do and provide excellence in customer experience. The CX Strategy has been developed to provide the roadmap over the next two years to help Council make that change. This change has been supported by the overwhelming positive response to the CX Strategy through the public exhibition period, as well as the results of the Community Perception Survey.

The feedback received has resulted in revisions to the draft CX Strategy to improve clarity through changes to language and layout. It is recommended that Council adopt the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025* in **Attachment 4**.

IMPLICATIONS	COMMENT
City Strategy Outcome	5.7 – Deliver excellent customer service
Business Plan Objectives, Outcomes / Services	Once adopted, the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025* will inform business planning for all units within Council.
Policy	The *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025* aligns to Council's Customer Service Charter.
Consultation	The draft *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025* was placed on public exhibition from 9 February to 12 March 2023. Key internal staff and external stakeholders have been consulted throughout the development of the draft *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025*. Councillor Briefings were held on 1 August and 5 December 2022.
Resource	This has been developed by staff with assistance from customer experience and engagement consultants, within allocated budgets.
Risk	There is no risk associated with this report. The *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2025* will only work to improve the experience of our customers and meet the priorities of the *Community Strategic Plan*.
Legal	There are no implications applicable to this report.
Legislation	There are no implications applicable to this report.
Budget/Financial	Costs associated with implementation of the *Customer Experience Strategy 2023 – 2025* have been incorporated into the draft future budgets.