



SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 10th JUNE 2026

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY – UPDATE ON DELIVERY PROGRESS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Commission on progress in delivering the Customer Experience Strategy and on overall customer experience performance across the Council.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Cabinet approved Leicestershire County Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2024–28 in December 2024, and it was agreed that periodic updates on implementation progress would be provided.
3. Prior to implementation, in November 2024 the Scrutiny Commission considered and commented on the new draft Strategy, welcoming its aim to bring greater consistency across the customer service system to improve the overall customer experience.

Background

4. The Customer Experience Strategy is rooted in transforming council services to be customer-centred, digitally enabled, and consistently delivered across the whole organisation, whilst improving accessibility, efficiency and overall user experience.
5. A small corporate cross-cutting team has supported overall delivery of the Strategy to date. Activity aligns with the Council's emerging "Better Leicestershire" Programme and sits within the "Resident Focused Organisation" theme. The Customer Experience Strategy is a key enabler for delivering the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) "Customer" line of £400k to be delivered over the next four years; savings are predominantly delivered through reducing the overall cost per contact and therefore associated officer effort (i.e. time saving and capacity release).
6. As reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny in late 2024, the local and national context for having the strategy remains unchanged:
 - a. Demand for public services continues to increase. Where possible, customers who are able to do so, should be encouraged to self-serve, helping to manage service growth and protect capacity for those who require direct support;

- b. We could do more to improve the overall experience of our customers when they interact with Council Services;
 - c. The Council’s financial position remains under strain, and we therefore need to continue to modernise, streamline and improve customer efficiency; and
 - d. Customer behaviour and preferences overall point to an expectation for digital services for a large proportion of customer groups
7. The Strategy provides a framework to ensure that significant changes to customer experience across Council services are evidence-led, controlled and deliver value for money. It is based on an understanding of current performance, customer need and demand, informed by customer feedback, data analysis and service pilots. It sets out clear design principles, including a customer-first approach, organisational accountability, efficient use of public funds and appropriate use of digital channels, to ensure that changes are consistent, inclusive and financially responsible. The Strategy also requires changes to be tested and monitored before wider implementation, with ongoing performance review and customer feedback used to inform continuous improvement.

Progress

8. Over the past year, focus has mainly been within the Council’s Customer Service Centre (CSC) as well as in several Children and Families Department services, using the Customer Experience Strategy principles to advance and improve its service to customers. Both areas make up a considerable volume of customer contact across the Council.
9. The Strategy points to being able to see a demonstrable improvement in the following performance areas, and this section aims to support how we are achieving this:
- a. Increased customer satisfaction
 - b. Improved responsiveness within achievable timescales
 - c. Reduced repeat contact
 - d. Fewer people needing to call us
 - e. More people using our online services
 - f. Reduced cost per contact
10. The tables below show how customers across the council are choosing to make contact and how this has shifted between 2024 and 2025::

a. Total contact volumes into the council:

Year	Channel					Total (excl. web)
	Web visits	Phone	Email	CH visits	Online*	
2024	7,042,865	763,087	1,147,018	6,883	230,582	2,168,826
2025	7,284,186	727,313	1,370,956	3,414	220,000	2,340,454
% change	+3%	-5%	+20%	-50%	-5%	+8%

**only the Council’s main forms platform “Granicus” included.*

b. Contact Channel usage:

Year	Channel			
	Phone	Email	CH visits	Online
2024	35%	53%	0.3%	11%
2025	31%	59%	0.1%	9%
% change	-4%	6%	-0.2%	-1%

c. Telephony performance:

Year	Total. No of open lines	Accepted	Missed
2024	259	75%	25%
2025	253	76%	24%

11. Looking across the whole council, total contact volume is considerable, and the increasing net volume supports the overall picture of increasing demand and pressure on Council services, demonstrating the size of the ambition outstanding. Telephony performance remains below the corporate target of 80% of calls handled, the high volume call centres (these lines account for 30% of all calls) have an average call handling of 84% likely because these have dedicated staff assigned to answering calls, the overall handling performance is brought down by the phone lines that have lower call volumes and less dedicated capacity. Further into this report you can see the difference that targeted work is having in service areas so far.
12. Complaints performance is a key indicator within the Customer Experience Strategy as timeliness, communication, response quality and ease of access to service are all drivers for complaints. However, it should be noted that dissatisfaction with the outcome of a service or policy decision will not always be within the Council's control, even where the complaint handling experience is positive. The volume of Corporate Complaints (excluding social care related complaints which follow a different route) received (based on stage 1/the initial complaint received about an issue only) since the strategy was introduced has decreased:

Year	Volume	% change since previous year
24/25	1213	13% reduction
23/24	1390	57% increase
22/23	885	65% increase

13. In 2024/25 75 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 (i.e. where a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial Stage 1 complaint), this was a slight reduction on 2023/24 (80) and 2022/23 (82).
14. The Environment and Transport, and Children and Families Departments consistently receive the highest number of complaints, with Special Educational Needs Assessment and planning (SENA), as well as SEN and School Transport being key factors.
15. Work is ongoing corporately to further enhance the insights that derive from customer complaints, to ensure that this valuable information is proactively used to address common trends in service areas that may be driving up complaints, particularly those that are influenced by a positive customer service experience. Improvements in SENA Complaints recording, analysis and reporting point to the highest proportion of

complaints being driven by issues with timeliness (meeting statutory timescales), placements (where a child has been placed) and provision not being delivered. Customer Service and Experience such as issues with communication does feature in small proportion of complaints.

Customer Service Centre

16. Since implementation of the Strategy the following key activities have been undertaken across the Customer Service Centre:
- a. Embedding previously implemented improvements across Highways, Blue Badge, School Transport, Waste Services and School Admissions (there is outstanding work within Concessionary Travel and an ongoing pipeline of continuous improvement particularly within Highways Services).
 - b. Implementation of a customer-focused service model improving first-time resolution.
 - c. Automation of routine processes, reducing manual handling.
 - d. Consistent customer handling approaches across services.
 - e. Expansion of digital and self-service channels with supported access retained.
 - f. Establishment of a repeatable transformation model across services.
 - g. Improved performance reporting and transparency.
17. Arising from this work, so far the impacts/outcomes that have been achieved over the past 12 months include reduced demand, improved satisfaction, and measurable efficiency gains as follows:
- a. Total CSC calls reduced from 119,186 to 96,479 (19% reduction).
 - b. Calls requiring advisor input reduced by 31%.
 - c. Queue times reduced from 8minute 13seconds to 4minute 14seconds.
 - d. £228,000 savings and £295,000 cost avoidance delivered through reducing the overall cost per contact and net contact volumes received in the CSC; the level of staff time and effort required to handle customer contact has been tangibly reduced to arrive at these values.
 - e. Self-service usage increased from 42% to over 50%.
 - f. Assisted digital; short telephone appointment slots to support customers who require some help in completing their Blue Badge applications; 64% of Blue Badge required some human assistance, and 36% zero touch.
 - g. Numerous customer compliments and testimonials across different areas of the service, see below some examples of what the service regularly receives:
 - “patient and reassuring when handling my renewal”*
 - “great communication and very patient”*
 - “They went above and beyond to help me with my mid-term school transfer”*
 - “The speed of processing my (Blue Badge) application was astonishing”*

Children and Families Department Customer Activity and Performance

18. Dedicated Customer Experience Improvement work within the education section of the department is ongoing as follows:

- i. Child Performance and Employment Licensing – this will see licensing fully automated this year, improving the overall end to end processing time to receive a license and freeing up officer time and effort.
- ii. Inclusion Service – work to improve the front door to inclusion, through streamlining and automating some pathways, improving the website and self service digital offering aims to support schools and parents with the right information up front, manage their expectations, ultimately freeing up officer capacity to address work backlogs and improve timeliness in overall work processing that ultimately supports children and young people to remain in education. A WhatsApp trial to support families with limited access to council services will also take place.
- iii. Special Educational Needs Assessment (SENA) team - considerable work to introduce clear and responsive pathways into the service through introducing an online contact form, an appointment booking option, remove unstructured emails and streamline the telephone routes, has enabled the service to have improved visibility and management oversight over contact coming in and how the service is responding. These improvements are fully live and in post implementation review (with dedicated performance reviews happening weekly and customer feedback loops in place to support refinement).

19. As a result of changes now live, the performance of the SENA team has improved significantly as outlined below:

- i. Telephone Call Answer Rate: 92% (above the target of 80%)
- ii. Average Call queue time: 5 m 37 s (above the target of 10 mins)
- iii. Online Contact First time response rate – 13.5 hours (above target of within 24 hours target)
- iv. Online Contact to close/fully resolve: 99% within 4 days (above target of within 14 days)
- v. Other metrics being tracked and analysed closely include Complaints, Microsoft Bookings (approximately 100 booked per month)
- vi. Ratio of contact by channel in April 2026:

Channel*	Monthly Vol.	Proportion
Calls	196	12%
Appointments	107	6%
Online	1380	82%
Total	1683	

*some contact continues to come via secure email or file transfer in addition to the above listed, but continuous improvement with the online offer aims to reduce this further and also address avoidable contact coming in irrespective of the route.

20. Progress towards a single Customer Experience Performance Framework is ongoing, and although this is not in place across all services, these indicators and approaches are being trialled in pockets of high customer demand areas as mentioned above:

Indicator	Metrics	Strategy Alignment
1. Customer Experience Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Satisfaction • Customer effort (ease to complete a task) • First contact resolution 	Evidence that customers are finding our services: “easier” “quicker”

Indicator	Metrics	Strategy Alignment
		"better overall"
2. Access and Channel shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channel usage split • Digital take up rates • Self-service completion • Website success rate 	Customers are moving to digital channels Services are designed well enough for self service
3. Speed and Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average response times by channel • Call wait/queue times • End to end transaction time • Backlog volumes and ageing 	Faster More efficient
4. Efficiency and value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per contact by channel • Avoidable contact rate • Contact volumes by service • Reduction in failure demand 	Processes are simplified and being optimised Wasteful and non-value activity is being reduced/eradicated
5. Accessibility and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted digital usage • Complaints related to access barriers 	Digital shift does not exclude vulnerable people
6. Quality and Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance monitoring (e.g. responses across all channels) • Training completion and capability measures 	Consistency across services and the organisation
7. Customer insight and continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume and themes of complaints • Compliments/feedback trends • Number of improvements driven by insights • User Testing 	We listen to customers and act on insight Continuously improving

Looking Forward

21. Progressing with Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve overall Customer Experience across several different concepts is underway. Leicestershire County Council's new AI chatbot is intended to make information on the website easier and quicker for residents to access. Unlike a standard website search, which depends on users choosing the right search terms and then working through a list of results, the chatbot allows people to ask questions in plain English and receive a direct, conversational response. This can help residents find the information they need more efficiently, particularly where council services or processes may be unfamiliar or spread across several pages. For end users, this should mean a more straightforward and intuitive

route to information, available at the point of need and designed to reduce frustration, save time, and improve the overall digital experience. This in turn can reduce contact with more expensive channels such as contact centres and enable people to get the help they need earlier.

22. The chatbot also has the potential to improve accessibility by supporting users who may find traditional website navigation more difficult, including people with lower digital confidence, those using assistive technologies, or residents who benefit from asking questions in a more natural way. To support confidence in the service, the chatbot has been through extensive internal testing and has also been tested with the Adults and Communities Citizen Engagement Panel, helping to ensure that feedback from service users has informed its development. Subject to successful completion of final testing, the current plan is for the chatbot to go live at the end of June or in early July this year.
23. Other AI opportunities identified within the Education Work, which is likely to improve Customer Experience across the council, will be explored further this year, for example to help create efficient, quality, and personalised customer interaction, e.g.:
 - Proactively standardise quality responses across teams and services
 - Turn customer feedback into actionable insight quicker
 - Anticipate customer needs
 - Tailor interactions to individual customers (linked with case management tasks)
24. Over the next 12 months the focus will be to:
 - a. continue progressing the work already underway
 - b. increase digital uptake and automation
 - c. flex our approach to take account of any changes in direction or priority arising from the Better Leicestershire Programme and Local Government Reorganisation
 - d. Strengthen performance reporting and governance.

Ongoing Key delivery risks

25. Key risks impacting the overall strategy implementation pace, scope, benefits impact and timing are associated with the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation and Better Leicestershire Programme priorities primarily, which may impact overall change and resource capacity. The main mitigations will be to maintain a tight focus on work already underway and on activity that will remain valid under any future council structure, avoiding an overcommitment, and to ensure the Customer Experience Strategy aligns tightly to Better Leicestershire, recognising the strategy is an enabler of better resident experience, efficiency savings, service simplification and demand management.

Equality Implications

26. There are no equality implications as a result of this report.

Human Rights Implications

27. There are no human rights implications arising from the information contained in this report.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

28. The Customer Programme will contribute positively to the overall environment and carbon agendas, due to reduction in paper processes and postage.

Background papers

Approved strategy link:

https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s187224/Appendix%20A_Customer%20Experience%20Strategy%20for%20approval%20Dec%202024.pdf

Scrutiny Commission Report – November 2024:

https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s186226/scrutiny%20Nov%202024_Customer%20Strategy%20final.pdf

Cabinet Approval – December 2024:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s187223/Customer%20Experience%20Strategy%20FINAL.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None.

Officer(s) to Contact

Jayne Glasgow, Assistant Director, Corporate Resources

Telephone: 0116 3054116

Email: jayne.glasgow@leics.gov.uk

Derrabella Hadley, Head of Customer Service, Corporate Resources

Telephone: 0116 3052693

Email: Derrabella.hadley@leics.gov.uk

Katy Murphy, Customer Programme Manager, Transformation Unit

Telephone: 0116 3059243

Email: katy.murphy@leics.gov.uk