

Your Customer Experience at the Highland Council

An t-Eòlas Luchd-cleachdaidh Agaibhse aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

The Highland Council is committed to being ambitious, sustainable, and connected, serving all people living, working, and visiting Highland.

By listening to our customers, we know we are doing lots of things right. Customers told us about examples of excellent customer service. We also know that we need to be ambitious in changing the way customers interact with the Council and focus on improving the overall experience of interacting with us.

Our work is informed by the Highland Council Programme (2022 – 2027) and the Highland Council Delivery Plan (2024 – 2027).

What is Customer Experience?

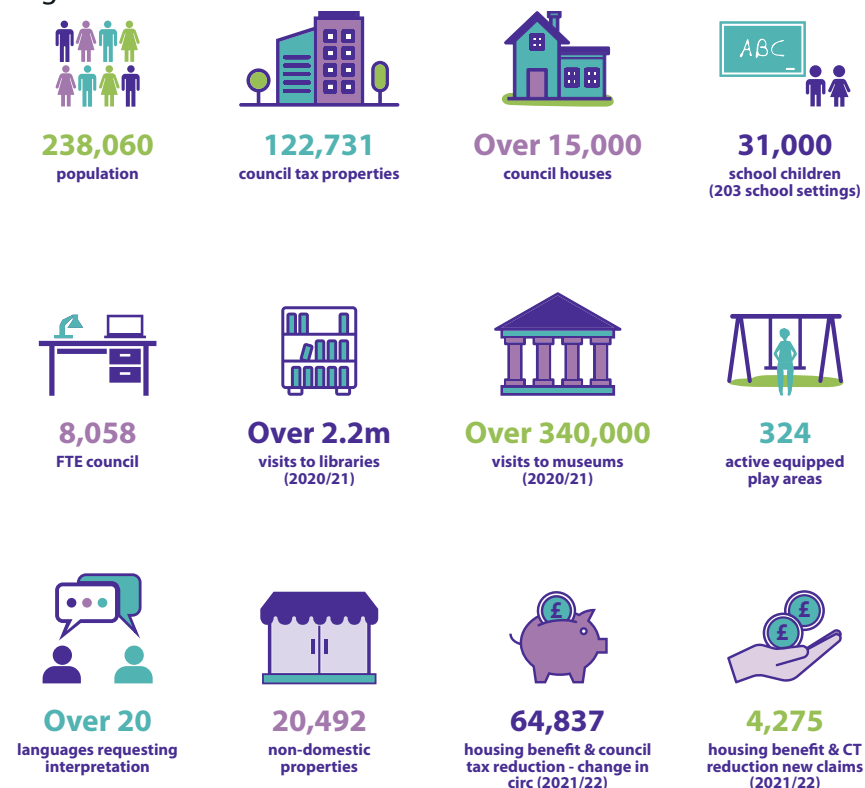
Customer Experience' is all the contact that a customer has with the Highland Council. This includes all reasons for contacting us, and all the ways of contacting us from your report through to resolution. For example, online, on the telephone or in person.

Our Vision is to put the customer at the centre of what we do, make it easy for customers to contact us, and to keep them updated as their enquiries progress.

Our Highland Ar Gàidhealtachd

The area covered by Highland Council is a third of the land area of Scotland. This includes some of the most rural and sparsely populated parts of the United Kingdom.

The population of the Highlands is 7th highest out of 32 Scottish regional Councils.



Our Customers An Luchd-cleachdaidh Againn

Our customers are defined as anyone who lives, works, or visits the Highland Council region.

Our customers fall into five main categories; residents, businesses, tourists, partners and Highland Council staff, Councilors and contractors.



Listening to our customers – Understanding where we are now

Ag èisteachd ris an luchd-cleachdaidh againn – A' tuigsinn far a bheil sinn an-dràsta

We listened to the views of over **1600 customers.**

Who did we speak to?

Thank you to all who took part in surveys and focus groups.

A survey was held on our website, along with a survey to staff. In total 1166 people responded to our surveys. Focus groups were held in community settings with a wide range of customers, including young people, community groups, ICT skills group, staff and our tenants.



Our customers told us

Na dh'inns an luchd-cleachdaidh againn dhuinn

In our focus group customers told us that they liked using our website, and that they would like to be able to use it for more things.

Customers also told us that they did not like having to chase us for updates but that they did not want us to move to a completely digital (website) offering as this does not suit all.

43% of customers surveyed on our website achieved what they wanted to online, however 45% did not achieve what they wanted to online.

Of customers who report being dissatisfied with our website and did not achieve what they wanted online; 22% were looking for a way to contact the Highland Council. In addition, a further 10% explained their online experience was not user-friendly.

"My mum tried to contact by phone, email and in-person before it was sorted."

Young Person, age 13



"I just want to know that my issue is being dealt with, and when I should expect a response."

Housing Tenant



In focus groups, common themes emerged. Customers told us:

- ▶ That they need to be able to **contact the correct person first time**
- ▶ That they need to have **clear expectations set**; and
- ▶ That we need to **communicate and provide updates through to resolution**



"I like having someone to speak to, I find going online difficult."

ICT Skills Group member



"I want to actually speak to someone instead of everything being online."

Online survey participant



Our Aims & Objectives Na h-Amasan & Mion-amasan Againn

Recognising the different needs of our customers, and listening to customers, in making any change our aims and objectives of our vision includes:

- ▶ customer-focused journey,
- ▶ all of our customers can access the services and information they need
- ▶ self-serve online to do so
- ▶ support customers with more complex needs and those unable to self-serve
- ▶ we will provide a range of contact methods,
- ▶ customers informed
- ▶ customer-focused approach to how we design, deliver and operate services.



We are changing the way we do things:

Developing Our Customer Charter

Throughout 2023-2024, we tested out the aims of our vision in focus groups and an extensive process review. This has shaped the aims and objectives for how we will operate and our approach to customer contact.

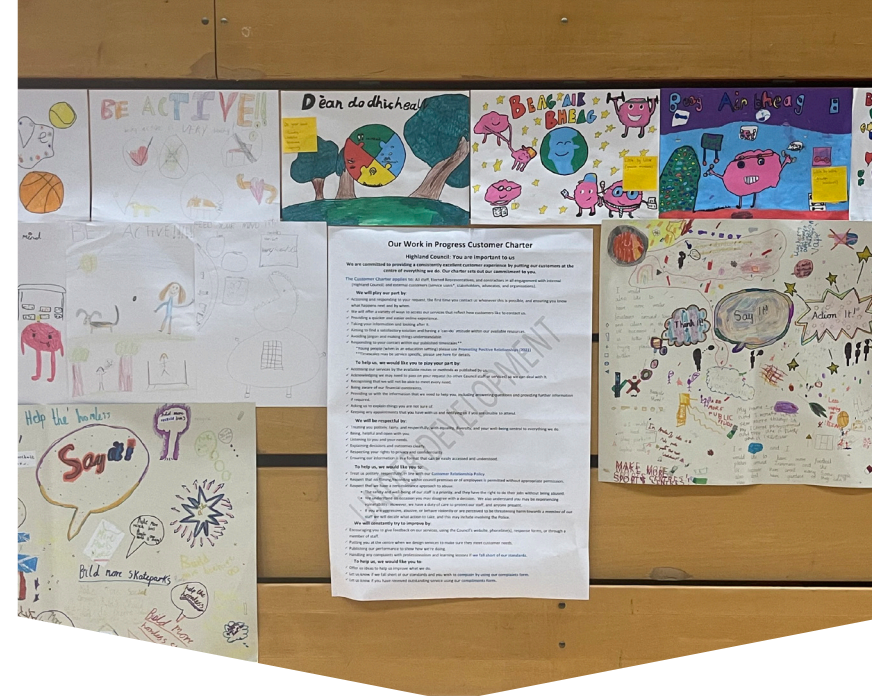
The findings from the focus groups (205 participants) included that communication on what is happening and by when was the clear request. This has been built into our framework that will help us make changes in the future.

Our Customer Charter ([attached in Appendix 1](#))

Our Framework for Success

Working with staff and customers we have developed a framework that will help us change to deliver on our vision. Our vision at the Highland Council is to be more customer focused, make it easy for customers to contact us and to keep customers updated regarding their enquires.

Our change framework (our 'Framework for Success') puts our Highland Council customer needs directly at the heart of our changes and ensures that we make changes at every point of the customer interaction.



This will mean Highland Council Wide Change

Our Framework of Success is to be applied universally across the Highland Council, enabling all customers to receive the same standard of customer experience when they contact us.

The Framework of Success will be delivered through the Council's Delivery Plan, Council Redesign Board and the My Council Programme.

What does this framework mean for me?

Mar sin, dè tha am frèam-obrach seo a' ciallachadh dhòmhsa?

As Highland Council Staff, Service, Elected Member or Contractor

Our planned changes to make it easier for customers to contact us	
Customers will have multiple ways to Contact Us, and they all will receive the same customer experience	Customers will be kept informed of any progress and the timescales we are working to.
We will improve online self-service options, and for those that can use them self-serve online can be our customer's option of choice to contact us	We get it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible.
Customers can view performance against meeting our published timescales.	Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.

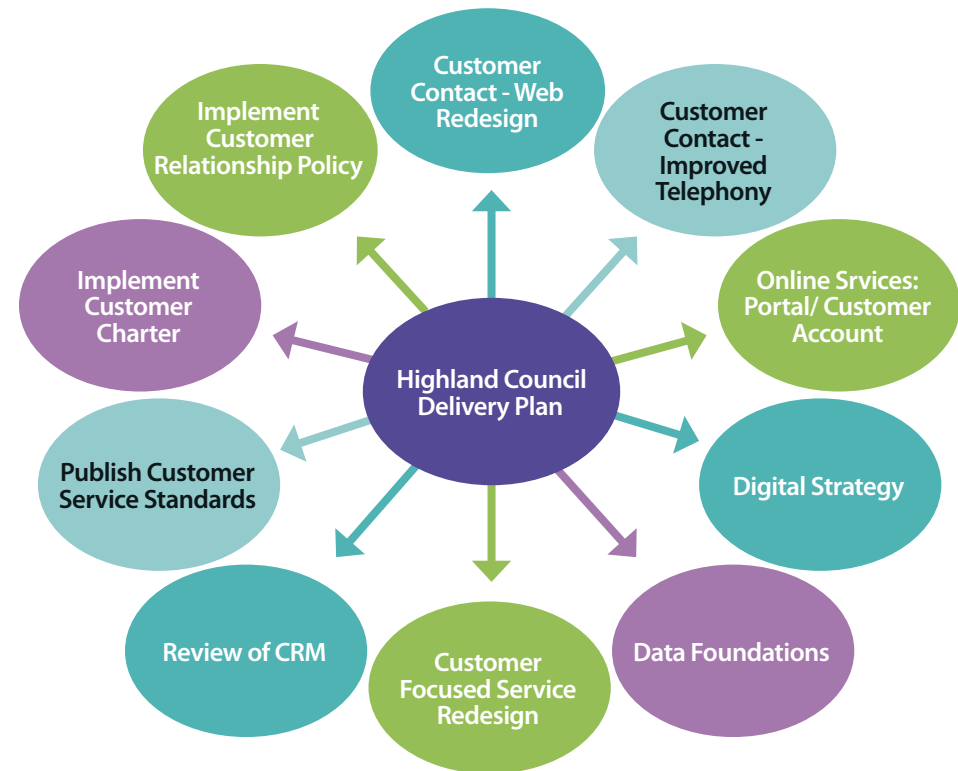
Our planned changes to make it easier for customers to contact us	
The Framework for Success will be applied across the Organisation	When services are reviewed or developed, this will be done in line with the vision, aims and objectives of this strategy and in line with the Framework for Success.
Staff will receive training, briefing sessions and communications on the Framework for Success and Customer Charter	We will grow a customer service culture, so that all employees keep a customer focused approach so that customers are always considered.
We will design our services using the 'Scottish Approach to Service Design' framework so that customers needs are always considered.	We will deliver a great customer experience across all ways of contacting us. We will ensure that every method of contact enables customers feel valued and informed of the next steps.

Delivering our Framework for Success

Lìbhrig: A' Lìbhrigeadh an Fhrèam-obrach Againn airson Soirbheas

Our Roadmap

The Framework of Success will be delivered through the Council's Delivery Plan, Council Redesign Board and the My Council Programme. The Framework is aligned to other corporate strategies such as the Digital Strategy and the Information and Data Strategy.



Our Measures of Success

Mar a Bhios Sinn a' Tomhas Soirbheas

Feedback from staff was they wished to know if they were delivering for customers. Our measures of the success of our Framework will be:

Measure/Performance Indicator	Frequency Reported/ Reviewed
Number and percentage of reports and requests for services resolved	Quarterly
Number and percentage of reports and requests for services open beyond published service standards	Quarterly
Complaints by geographic and service area resolved, lessons learned and actions taken (measure under development)	Quarterly
Percentage calls that contact the right person first time (measure under development)	Quarterly
Customer Satisfaction survey - 85% report overall satisfaction	Quarterly
Choices of contact channels – report increase/ decrease in usage	Quarterly
Review our Customer Experience Strategy	2027

App 1: Our Customer Charter

Eàrr-ràdh 1: Cairt an Luchd-cleachdaidh Againn

We are committed to providing a consistently excellent customer experience by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do. Our charter sets out our commitment to you and what we aim to deliver.

The Customer Charter applies to: All staff, Elected Representatives, and contractors in all engagement with internal (Highland Council) and external customers (service users*, stakeholders, advocates, and organisations).

*Young people (when in an education setting) please see **Promoting Positive Relationships (2021)**

We will play our part by:

- ▶ We will work on actioning and responding to your request, the first time you contact us whenever this is possible. We will work on ensuring you know what happens next and by when.
- ▶ We will offer a variety of ways to access our services that reflect how customers like to contact us.
- ▶ Providing a quicker and easier online experience.
- ▶ Taking your information and looking after it.
- ▶ Aiming to find a satisfactory solution and having a 'can-do' attitude within our available resources.
- ▶ Avoiding jargon and making things understandable.

- ▶ Responding to your contact within our published timescales*.
- ▶ *Timescales may be service specific, please see here for details (link to be added once ready)

To help us, we would like you to play your part by:

- ▶ Accessing our services by the available routes or methods as published by us.
- ▶ Acknowledging we may need to pass on your request (to other Council staff or services) so we can deal with it.
- ▶ Recognising that we will not be able to meet every need.
- ▶ Being aware of our financial constraints.
- ▶ Providing us with the information that we need to help you, including answering questions and providing further information if required.
- ▶ Asking us to explain things you are not sure of.
- ▶ Keeping any appointments that you have with us and notifying us if you are unable to attend.

We will be respectful by:

- ▶ Treating you politely, fairly, and respectfully, with equality, diversity, and your well-being central to everything we do.
- ▶ Being, helpful and open with you.
- ▶ Listening to you and your needs.
- ▶ Explaining decisions and outcomes clearly.
- ▶ Respecting your rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- ▶ Ensuring our information is in a format that can be easily accessed and understood.

To help us, we would like you to:

- ▶ Treat us politely, respectfully, in line with our Customer Relationship Policy.
- ▶ Respect that no filming/recording within council premises or of employees is permitted without appropriate permission.
- ▶ Respect that we have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse:
- ▶ The safety and well-being of our staff is a priority, and they have the right to do their jobs without being abused.
- ▶ We understand on occasion you may disagree with a decision. We also understand you may be experiencing vulnerability.

However, we have a duty of care to protect our staff, and anyone present.

- ▶ If you are aggressive, abusive, or behave violently or are perceived to be threatening harm towards a member of our staff we will decide what action to take, and this may include involving the Police.

We will constantly try to improve by:

- ▶ Encouraging you to give feedback on our services, using the Council's website, phoneline(s), response forms, or through a member of staff.
- ▶ Putting you at the centre when we design services to make sure they meet customer needs.
- ▶ Publishing our performance to show how we're doing.
- ▶ Handling any complaints with professionalism and learning lessons if we fall short of our standards.

To help us, we would like you to:

- ▶ Offer us ideas to help us improve what we do.
- ▶ Let us know if we fall short of our standards and you wish to complain by using our complaints form.
- ▶ Let us know if you have received outstanding service using our compliments form.