



Customer Engagement Strategy 2020-2022

Our Ambition

West Lancashire Borough Council is ambitious for West Lancashire, our Economy and Environment and for Health and Wellbeing across our local communities. The Customer Engagement Strategy will drive the delivery of these ambitions by establishing how the Council will be a listening and conversing organisation.

The Council will always look to improve and recognises the important role that our customers have in making changes and improvements to our services. We believe that by encouraging our customers to provide feedback, through a range of engagement opportunities, we are able to shape and improve our services by taking on board their views.

This Customer Engagement Strategy recognises the diversity of our communities and the need to provide appropriate opportunities for customers to participate at a level they wish to in order to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development.

The two priority outcomes for this strategy are:

- To have effective customer feedback and involvement that shapes Council services
- To build and develop a digitally active West Lancashire

We aim to deliver this by:

- Providing various involvement methods to enable customers to choose how they would like to be involved at a level they wish to in order to influence service delivery, decision making and policy development
- Increasing our digital engagement methods to customer to enable them to engage with us at a time and place that suits them

The strategy draws on good practises that the Council already follows and recognises the significant role that our customers have in making changes and improvements to services. It outlines our principles, levels of engagement and how we use feedback to influence decisions. It is supported by 3 action plans which will be monitored, reported and updated annually.

What is Customer Engagement?

Customer engagement is about making sure customers are involved and informed and able to take part in a range of ways to help influence service delivery. There are three main levels of customer engagement, these are:

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- **Involving**

Involvement is the most interactive form of engagement. Through involvement customers will have a greater depth of influence over decision-making and service delivery, for example through co-designing or commissioning services.

- **Consulting**

Consultation allows customers to have their say about the decisions and services that affect them. We will provide opportunities for customers to take part and for their views to be heard and acted upon. We will make it clear at the start of the process what can and cannot be changed.

- **Informing**

In order to get involved in influencing services policies and decisions customer need to be informed about what and when things are happening. We will provide clear and accurate information relating to when and how decisions affecting services and future policies are made.

To ensure that we meet our regulatory requirements some consultations must take place. Details of these can found on the Council website on the Your View section. You can access this by visiting www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/your-views.aspx

Our Engagement Principles

The Council is committed to effective and influential engagement by linking customers to decision making, relating decisions to customer aspirations and needs and there being trust and confidence in the engagement processes. To achieve this we will follow the following principles:

1. Be honest and open

We will be clear about the purpose of any engagement activity and what can be influenced. We will use honest, accurate and unbiased information.

2. Make it easy

We will use a variety of engagement tools and information channels to make it easy for customers to be kept informed and give their views. We are developing further digital engagement methods through our social media platforms to ensure up to date information is shared in a timely manner with our customers.

3. Listen to everyone

Undertake fair and impartial engagement to ensure that customers are offered equal opportunities to engage in issues that may affect them and enable them to have an effective role in setting priorities, designing services and influencing decisions.

4. Keep in touch

Provide feedback and demonstrate the changes that are made as a result of customer engagement and feedback. Where we are unable to act on feedback we will explain why.

Our Commitment to Engagement

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We want to ensure that we hear the voice of the customer in how services are delivered and decisions are made. We will seek to engage customers' involvement and feedback on the following matters:

- Significant policy changes
- Shaping and planning service provision
- Financial planning
- Customer satisfaction on general Council services via our Citizen Survey
- Customer satisfaction for housing tenants via the Survey to Tenants and Residents (STAR)
- Significant projects which have an impact on the community e.g. Tawd Valley Park, Leisure facilities
- Matters where we have a legal obligation to consult

We will:

- Create opportunities for customers to be involved
- Enable customers to have an effective role in setting priorities, designing services, monitoring performance and making decisions
- Use customer feedback to help identify customer needs and where appropriate use these to influence Council policies and strategies
- Encourage ongoing feedback through comments, compliments and complaints by making this service available at any time for all Council services
- Seek feedback from customers when they access services e.g. housing repairs, as a way to continually monitor performance and customer expectations

Delivering Customer Engagement

To deliver customer engagement we will approach it by using two involvement principles. This will enable us to have a focused approach on how we deliver tangible results that are easily monitored.

Effective customer feedback and involvement

Customer Feedback

Customer feedback helps us to deliver excellent customer focused services. It lets us know what customers think we are doing well, identifies areas of poor satisfaction with our services and identify if there are any reoccurring themes.

Tenant involvement

We want to give our housing customers opportunities to be involved in shaping the services they receive. This can range from providing feedback about a repair, giving comments on new policies or being involved in our Tenant Scrutiny Group.

What we will do in the future is create more opportunities and a simpler experience which encourages customers to be involved and demonstrates how customer engagement informs decision making to support our communities.

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Our customer feedback action plan (Appendix A) and our Tenant Involvement action plan (Appendix B) details the actions we will take to achieve this.

A digitally active West Lancashire

Customers' expectations about how they access services are changing. There is increased demand from our customers to be able to transact and interact digitally with us, using a range of devices, including, smartphones, tablets and laptops to access services via online and social media channels. This includes engagement.

Since digital engagement is a newer area of customer engagement it therefore currently demands additional attention. We aim to increase our digital presence and offer our customers new, improved and accessible ways to interact with us and use our online services. Our digital engagement action plan (Appendix C) details the actions we will take to achieve this.

Methods for Effective Customer Engagement

Effective engagement will help us to understand our customers' needs and aspirations, which will help us deliver good quality services and better outcomes. It will help us to shape services based on what our customers tell us they want now and in the future.

In order to engage our customers, we will provide a wide variety of ways for them to receive information about services, provide feedback and get involved with Council services such as:

- The Council website
- Social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter
- Housing mobile app
- Comments, complaints and compliments
- Newspaper press releases
- Citizen survey
- Focus groups
- Meetings
- Surveys
- Tenant Scrutiny Group
- Your Voice –Tenant consultation group

We will include Councillors, Parish Councillors and partner agencies as appropriate, as part of our customer engagement activities to actively encourage a wider range of engagement and aim to seek a true reflection of our customer's views.

To find out more about Parish Councils or who your local councillor is, visit

www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council.aspx

For more information about the Councils approach to Equality and Diversity, visit

<http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/equality-and-diversity.aspx>

Using customer feedback

When we carry out a consultation exercise on a large scale, there are many different considerations taken into account before a decision is made. Customers' comments and involvement will form one part of the information used to make a decision.

Following all formal consultation and involvement we will:

- Publish a summary of feedback received and our response to it
- Show how the results have been used to influence final decisions
- Feedback the results and the decision to those who took the time to get involved where possible

This feedback will be provided on our dedicated consultation site 'Your Views' on the Councils website, this can be found at www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/your-views.aspx. We will look to develop this webpage to also evidence the change made as a result of all customer feedback.

We will also use comments, compliments and complaints to help gather customer feedback. Complaints are an important part of the Council's continuous improvement and listening approach. Whilst we aim to provide excellent standards of service to our customers at all times, we recognise that there may be occasions where we get things wrong. This could be when customers are dissatisfied with their individual experiences or their expectations are not met. When this happens we will review the complaint to understand all the issues and identify any lessons to be learned. Wherever possible we will use this information to improve our services.

Keeping your information safe

West Lancashire Borough Council has a robust approach to data protection. Not all consultation requires customers to provide personal data. For more information visit <https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/legal-statements-and-foi/general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr.aspx>

Review of the strategy

The strategy will be reviewed and re-issued every 3 years. However, during the period of this strategy we will review the ways in which we collect customer feedback to ensure we are using suitable methods, information is being used to improve or change services and it offers value for money.

Outcomes and Monitoring

It is important for us to know if we are achieving our aims for this strategy. We will do this by monitoring and updating the associated action plans. These will be published on the website annually.

Links to other Council documents

This strategy supports and links to a number of other council documents:

- Council Plan (2019-2021)
- Digital Communications Strategy

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- Digital by preference action and development plan (2017-2020)
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy

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Customer Feedback Action Plan 2020-2021

We will create more opportunities and a simpler experience which encourages customers to give feedback and demonstrates how customer engagement informs decision making to support our communities

Aim (This is what we are going to do)	Objective (This is how we are going to do it)	Outcome (This is what we will achieve)	Time Frame (This is when it will be done by)	Who (This is who is responsible for the action)	Targets/Measures (This is what we will monitor to check we are achieving our actions)
Annual update of the action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and review the current aims set out in the action to understand if they are reflective of the work required 	An up to date action plan that reflects work required to successfully achieve this strategy	Required to be undertaken every 12 months from implementation	Customer Experience Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current action plan
Raise awareness of customer engagement processes within WLBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch strategy Develop process that encourages services to provide customer feedback and how they use to improve services Provide bi annually updates to WLBC staff 	Consistent and ongoing reports of customer engagement within the service	December 2021	Customer Experience Manager/Customer Experience Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of reported changes to services following customer feedback
Increase opportunities for customer to provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased presence on social media Development of the 	Enable customers to contact us and receive information through a	March 2021	Digital Communications Manager/Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of comments received through social

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feedback	self-serve account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consultation calendar on the Council website • Further development work to be undertaken to the current consultation pages on the Council website • Carry out further work to understand how customers would like to feedback to us, enabling effective communication 	range of digital methods that suit their needs Increase customers knowledge of engagement opportunities More customer feedback that can be used to drive services		Experience Manager	media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of customers signed up and using online services via the portal • Increase in visits to the council consultation pages • Number of customers completing satisfaction surveys • Website has up to date sections regarding consultation including the go live of the consultation calendar
Review complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a review of 	Have a complaints	June 2020	Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the

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monitoring process	current complaints process throughout the Council	process that is fit for purpose, easy to use and used to improve services. Have a more focussed approach to how we learn and improve following complaints.		Engagement Manager	revised complaints process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor satisfaction of resolved complaints in relation to the process taken • Annually report complaints update to Members
Gather the views of our customers about Council services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out the Citizen Survey – a random sample survey of customers by post via partner organisation. • Create an online open survey to enable all customers the opportunity to provide feedback 	Enable service improvements to be identified through customer feedback and gain data on customer satisfaction levels Ensure changes to services offer value for money and reflect the needs and aspirations	September 2020	Customer Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23% of postal surveys completed and returned • 300 open surveys completed • Monitor value for money on surveys and actively look for savings • Uptake if tenants wanting to be

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote customer feedback methods 	of our customers			involved in "Your Voice"
Explore and investigate the development of a Citizens Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review with Managers the topic for discussion Carry out consultation to seek customer's interest 	Gain an understanding if there is interest in developing a survey group and ensure there are relevant topic for discussion	September 2020	Customer Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customers expressing an interest
Gather the views of our tenants about housing services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a Survey to Tenants and Resident (STAR) Have a yearly plan of consultations in place for "Your Voice" members 	<p>Enable service improvements to be identified through customer feedback and gain data on customer satisfaction levels</p> <p>Ensure changes to services offer value for money and reflect the needs and aspirations of our customers</p>	December 2020	Customer Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% of tenants completing the STAR A yearly published plan of the consultation for "Your Voice" members Monitor value for money of surveys and actively look for savings

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		Enables tenants to hold the landlord to account for the services it provides.			
Evidence the impact of customer feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a 'you said, we did' digital document • Report back to customers involved in consultations exercises • Monitor the number of services changed following customer feedback • Publish results of surveys and make customers aware of changes made following their feedback 	Evidence on how customer feedback has made a difference to services	March 2021	Customer Engagement Manager/Digital Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visits to website pages • Number of feedback reports following a consultation exercise requested/sent to customers • Number of services changed as a result of customer feedback

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Appendix B

Tenant Involvement Action Plan 2020-2021

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Annual update of the action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and review the current aims set out in the action to understand if they are reflective of the work required 	An up to date action plan that reflects work required to successfully achieve this strategy	Required to be undertaken every 12 months from implementation	Customer Experience Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current action plan
Support the Tenant Scrutiny Group (TSG) in their role as tenant champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the scrutiny role by attending regular meetings • Champion the scrutiny role within the Council • Identify recommendations to improve services for tenants • Identify value for money savings • Support training as required 	The ability to identify improvements for housing services through our commitment to supporting a co-regulatory operating environment	December 2021	Customer Engagement Officer/Housing Inclusion Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of scrutiny reviews completed • Number of recommendations agreed and delivered within set timescales • Cost to delivering reviewed services

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an annual planning and review event for TSG members 				
Undertake a review of tenant involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a consultation via our digital mechanisms, post and face to face 	An increased awareness of Tenant Involvement and an increase in the number of tenants involved	March 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new members on your voice A menu of involvement options that reflect how tenants would like to get involved Number of new tenants now involved following the review
Explore and investigate the development of a digital housing newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out consultation to seek customer's interest in a digital newsletter 	Gain an understanding of customers' ability to access digital information Develop an insight into	December 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customers completing the survey The implementation

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		the information customer would like to read about			of a digital newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tenants accessing the digital newsletter
Develop a block inspectors scheme for tenants living in blocks of flats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target tenants living in blocks to invite them to take part through a monthly digital survey 	Gain data on the conditions of the communal areas of the blocks of flats. Increase the number of engaged customers	December 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tenants signed up in pilot • Number of completed surveys and data received
Increase the effectiveness of Your Voice and increase membership levels to evidence the wider customer voice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a 12 month plan of consultation questions which will help gain feedback relating to planned projects • Carry out regular marketing campaigns via the website, social media and press 	Gain increased tenant feedback data which will be used to shape services and decisions Increase the input and use of the customer voice in shaping local services through scrutiny reviews.	December 2021	Customer Engagement Officer/Housing and Inclusion Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of Your Voice members by 25% • Have a yearly consultation plan for surveys in place • Number of surveys completed and returned

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	releases as well as direct targeting, to help increase numbers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the group at digital engagement events 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of changes made within the service as a result of customer involvement

Appendix C

Digital Inclusion Action Plan 2020-2021

We will increase our digital presence and offer our customers new, improved and accessible ways to interact with our services

Aim (This is what we are going to do)	Objective (This is how we are going to do it)	Outcome (This is what we will achieve)	Time Frame (This is when it will be done by)	Who (This is who is responsible for the action)	Targets/Measures (This is what we will monitor to check we are achieving our actions)
Increase the use of digital technology to connect with customers throughout the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen our digital communications through social media Develop our on line self-serve account Increase opportunities for online engagement and investigate new digital engagement tools 	<p>Enable customers to contact us and receive information through a range of digital methods that suit their needs</p> <p>To simplify and expand the ways in which customers can provide feedback</p>	December 2021	Digital Communications Manager/Customer Engagement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of tweets / posts created / likes / follows Number of customers signed up and using on line services via the portal Number of online engagement carried out
Increase digital skills within the community by working with local partnership organisations / community structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partner agencies to increase digital initiatives Promotion of the councils Learn my Way platform 	Enable more customers to access digital services through support and training	March 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customers signed up to self-serve Number of customers signed up to Learn my Way
Roll out phase 2 of the digital support sessions at our Sheltered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange tech and tea mornings Identify any additional training 	Raise awareness of digital services and increase the number of customers being digitally enabled	June 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 new sheltered customers attending digital training sessions

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accommodation schemes	requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target any new customers living in sheltered schemes 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies of impact had by residents going digital
Hold events to support Get Online Week 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support partners and hold events throughout the week in different community locations 	Raise awareness of digital services and increase the number of customers being digitally enabled	October 2020	Customer Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of 10 customers signed up to Learn My Way as a result of the events Engage with a minimum of 15 people about getting online