

Customer Experience Strategy

North West Leicestershire District Council – 2018 - 2021

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Tom Shardlow

Head of Customer Services

tom.shardlow@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Executive Summary

- a) North West Leicestershire District Council is transforming the way that it interacts with its customers. This strategy provides the vision and principles for this transformation and in doing so, outlines our ambition and appetite to meet our customers' needs.
- b) The strategy is titled as an **experience** strategy, in recognition that the effective management of a customer relationship is not only about how responsive, efficient and technologically advanced services are, but is also equally about the emotion, feeling and impression that an individual experiences when interacting with an organisation.
- c) The strategy enables the authority to move away from a view that customer service is the responsibility of a team or department, but instead recognises that it is a cross cutting theme that spans the full organisation and links intrinsically with our wider plans. It enables customer experience to become part of our core vision and values framework that each and every officer subscribes too. The strategy raises the profile of the customer from the top to the bottom of the organisation and ensures that our plans, decisions and business actions, are customer centric.
- d) We are aware that both the technology landscape and our customers' preferences are changing at an ever accelerating pace. This is at a time when the resources available to Local Government are decreasing. We now need to find new, innovative and efficient ways of enabling our customers to interact with the Council, whilst at the same time releasing our capacity to support those customers that really need us.
- e) The strategy outlines how we will deliver this change, and reinforces our commitment to providing fair and open access to our services. This strategy provides the mandate to mobilise an ambitious change programme that will transform the authority's approach to customers.

Linked Strategies

- f) The Customer Experience Strategy links to the following other core Council strategies:
 - a. Council Delivery Plan
 - b. Communications Strategy (in draft)
 - c. People Plan (in draft)
 - d. Commercialisation Strategy (in draft)
 - e. Medium Term Financial Strategy

Introduction

- 1.1 The 'Customer Experience Strategy' places our customers at the heart of the organisation. It seeks to modernise and improve the authority's approach to customer service, through investing in material, human and technological resources, in response to a rapidly changing customer expectation.
- 1.2 To date the authority has made targeted attempts at improving customer experience through various programmes and initiatives; significant investment has been made in developing digitalisation and the online customer experience.
- 1.3 The strategy builds upon this previous work, encompassing the 'Customer First' and 'One Council' concepts, to deliver the systemic change required to transform customer experience and realise the benefit of previous investment.
- 1.4 The experience strategy outlines the underlying principles, foundation, design and recommended approach to transforming the way in which we interact with our customers. Its adoption will enable the systemic change required to transform the organisation's customer experience offer over the period 2018 – 2021.

Customer First Experience Vision 2018- 2021

Vision Statement

- 2.1 By 2021 all appropriate transactions will be 'digital by default', placing a greater emphasis on customer choice, and offering seamlessly integrated digital experiences. Our call centre and face to face environments will have released capacity that will enable our skilled officer time to be invested into those customers, circumstances, opportunities or transactions that benefit from human contact.
- 2.2 Our physical and digital customer environments, will be safe, secure, modern, accessible, welcoming and fit for purpose. Our officers across the authority will be invested in and will understand what good customer experience means, their unique contribution in rendering this and the expectations upon them. Our points of access, whether physical or digital will offer consistent, inclusive and linked customer experiences.
- 2.3 Our plans will be customer data led, seeking to link customer feedback and experience to specific areas or transactions and react accordingly, in a cycle of continuous internal improvement. Our customer experience objectives will be linked to measurable outputs, and decisions will be made against business cases that seek to deliver a continued return on investment.

- 2.4 By 2021 North West Leicestershire District Council will offer a modern, efficient, customer experience that the organisation and its customers can be truly proud of.

Principles

3.1 The strategy draws upon the following principles and themes in its design:

- **Customer First:** Placing customers at the heart of the organisation. Empowering our staff to provide their very best customer experience.
- **Customer Access:** A modern, fresh approach to customer experience and spaces, whether physical or digital. Light, clean and welcoming environments.
- **Customer Choice:** Contact channels matched to the needs and preferences of the customer.
- **Digital by Default:** Digital experiences so good that they are the channel of choice.
- **Inclusion:** Recognising our customers' unique circumstances and in doing so ensuring that those that need our services are not excluded.
- **Customer Insight:** Establishing our data sources and consistently measuring our customer experiences. Knowing our customers and their needs. Understanding why things go wrong and learning from this to improve our services and customer pathways.
- **Value for Money, Efficiency and Return on Investment:** Recognising the financial climate, benefit focused outcomes, calculated return on investments, business minded decision making.

Our Customers

Customer Experience

4.1 We do have basic information about how customers contact us. In 2016, the ways in which customers accessed the Council were:

Number of telephone calls to the Customer Services Team	116,835
Number of letters the Council sent out (Council wide)	178,148
Number of face to face interactions	22,792

4.2 In addition the Council has around 11,000 users signed up (July 2018) to its online account, where customers can access a limited range of services.

4.3 In context, the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) compared the average costs of customer interactions as follows:

Face to face interactions - £8.62

Telephone interactions - £2.83
Digital (online) interactions - £0.15*

*This figure assumes a fully integrated experience that does not require any officer handling.

- 4.4 The Council has made some progress in improving customer experience and over recent years has invested in improving the digital experience, by undertaking an ambitious programme to bring services online through eforms and a self-service customer account.
- 4.5 However analysis, provided by the former Interim Director of Resources in late 2017 found that :
- *Customers are having to wait unacceptable periods of time to contact the contact centre by phone.*
 - *The reception area and customer services facilities require improvement. There is also a lack of good-standard meeting / interview rooms that staff can use when meeting with the public.*
 - *The number of services that can be accessed online through the website is very low. Only a minority of customers interact with the Council through electronic means.*
 - *A new website is being implemented. It then needs to be developed to ensure its content is relevant, up-to-date and accessible; and that it is a portal to our services.*
 - *Customer services standards are unclear and, where they do exist, are not always consistently followed.*
 - *In most areas, the Council does not have a comprehensive picture of customers' needs – nor does it have the ability to track and record these.*
 - *There is no clear customer strategy and vision to guide the Council in its quest to improve customer access and the quality of services delivered to customers.*
 - *Corporate customer service performance indicators have a low profile and do not receive sufficient scrutiny.*
 - *There is an uneven culture of customer service across the organisation.*
 - *We cannot demonstrate how we learn from complaints.*
- 4.6 Though some progress has been made, particularly around digitalisation, the analysis provided in late 2017 is still largely reflective of the organisation's current position.

Customer Profile & Demographic

- 5.1 Local Government customer experience is becoming increasingly digital, which is driven by a supply of new technology and capabilities, combined with an increasing customer demand to interact digitally.

- 5.2 The Council has an estimated 98,000 residents with a wide variety of needs spread across 279.2km². In an ONS study the number of adults (aged 16 years and over) was given at 78,159.
- 5.3 Data from the ‘Get Digital Heat Map’ produced by the Local Government Association and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in association with Lloyds Banking Group (2017), provides an indication of Digital Inclusion at a Local Authority Level.
- 5.4 Digital inclusion is an indicator of the ability for a group of individuals or customers to be able to access information or services digitally.
- 5.5 Data specific to North West Leicestershire:
- **Age** -19.7% of adults in North West Leicestershire are **over 65**
 - **Income** - £25,200 is the **average income per taxpayer** in North West Leicestershire
 - **Education** - 39.20% of adults in North West Leicestershire have **no qualifications and/or no Level 1 qualifications**
 - **Health** - 18.1% of adults in North West Leicestershire have **long-term illness or disability**.
 - **Infrastructure** – Broadband 10mbs - 2.00% of households in North West Leicestershire **do not receive broadband speeds of at least 10 megabits per second (Mbps)**.
 - **Infrastructure** – Broadband 2mbs - 0.00% of households in North West Leicestershire **do not receive broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbps)**.
 - **Infrastructure** – 4G Mobile Data - 21.48% of households in North West Leicestershire **do not receive 4G mobile data from all providers**.
 - **Offline** - 11.7% of adults in North West Leicestershire have **not been online within the last 3 months**.
 - **Basic Digital Skills** - 78% of adults in North West Leicestershire have **all five Basic Digital Skills**.
 - **Basic Digital Skills Used** - 46% of adults in North West Leicestershire have **used all five Basic Digital Skills in the last three months**.
- 5.6 The likelihood of overall digital exclusion in North West Leicestershire is **Medium**.
- 5.7 This compares negatively against the digital exclusion likelihood in neighbouring Local Authorities:

Table 2: Likelihood of Digital Exclusion Leicestershire

Local Authority Area	Likelihood of Digital Exclusion
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North West Leicestershire District	Medium
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough	Low
Blaby District	Low
Oadby & Wigston Borough	Low
Harborough District	Low
Melton Borough	Medium
Leicester City	Medium

5.8 This data gives a baseline position of our customers and highlights some of the barriers that our customers may face when interacting with us. Our plans as we move forward need to proactively consider these challenges and barriers, to ensure that the services we provided do not exclude the most vulnerable in our community.

Delivery of the Vision

Principles Explored

- 6.1 Putting the **customer first** or at the heart of the organisation are phrases often used but rarely realised. However it's not that complicated, and in practice it means remembering that as a local authority, our purpose is to provide public services to the residents, businesses and visitors to the district and therefore every decision, business action or procedure should be in support of this.
- 6.2 Through a workforce development work stream, we will grow our organisational capabilities to enable staff and managers to be empowered to provide their very best level of customer service. We will provide support, training and guidance around our customer values and the expectations upon staff to live and breathe these values. This will give our trusted colleagues the professional discretion and flexibility to treat our customers as individuals, tailoring our services to meet their needs.
- 6.3 Equally work will be done to understand and map our customer journeys and actively seek to improve them, promoting an ethos of getting things right, on time, first time.
- 6.4 We will carry out a review of the way in which **customers access** our services, exploring the opportunities to providing modern, fit for purpose environments, whether they are face to face, or digital. We will provide space, opportunities and support for our customers to self-serve and access digital services. We will do this through establishing a working group that will review and redesign our customer service environments and front door offer.

- 6.5 This will be extended to our Customer Service Team, reviewing the structure, role and functions within the team to ensure that they are best equipped to successfully meet our customer demand. Our staff will be friendly, professional, welcoming, and be pleased to serve, assist or signpost.
- 6.6 Our digital spaces will be safe, secure, easy to use and fit for purpose. The language used will be plain and simple to understand, and information will be provided in bite size pieces and give consideration to our customers' language needs. Our webpages and applications will be up to date, modern and responsive to customer feedback. We will provide a consistent look, feel and experience to all of our online content, with a clearly identifiable brand. We will benchmark our environments with our peers and other organisations and learn from this to continually improve customer access to our services.
- 6.7 We're committed to providing our **customers** with **choice** about the way in which they access our services, through understanding their needs and matching them to the most appropriate contact channel. As an organisation we provide a variety of contact channels, such as face to face, telephony, online, self-service and post, and will continue to offer a comprehensive range.
- 6.8 In response to an increasingly digital age and reflecting our customer appetite, we will establish a preferred hierarchy of contact channels, dependant on the need, circumstance, capability, and the cost of delivery. This approach means that our officer time can be dedicated to those customers, contacts or situations that benefit from our skilled officer input; and those that are able and want to, can self-serve through non mediated channels.

Contact Channel	Hierarchy Explanation
Self Service (Digital)	This is a preferred channel for most contact. Ideal for noncomplex, high volume or routine contact or applications. Allows access 24/7/365 and gives customers the most efficient route through to our services.
Assisted Self Service (Digital)	For those customers who want to or should access our services digitally but need support in doing so. This may be through new contact channels such as web chat, or assistance provided from floor walkers in face to face environments.
Telephony	At present this is the primary contact channel, offering convenience, rapid access and a human touch. However telephony demand can overwhelm our contact centres and a channel shift needs to occur for those that are able to self-serve.
Face to Face	The traditional contact channel of face to face is expensive to provide and is inconvenient for many customers. It is best reserved for those customers with

	complex, urgent needs or vulnerability that render other channels inappropriate.
Post, email, fax and Other	Written correspondence is used widely but creates delays for customers in resolving their enquiry. The authority should promote other channels over this, and where written submission is required, explore the use of technology to automate contact handling.

- 6.9 Customer experience will be increasingly **digital by default** meaning that we will design our processes with self-service and digital access in mind as the preferred contact channel. We will support the organisation, through a digitalisation programme to provide digital services that are the contact channel of choice. When interacting with customers, our default channel will be digital, providing access 24 hours a day 365 days a year. We will ensure that our processes are designed with the customer in mind, so that the digital channels offer a better, faster and improved experience to traditional contact channels. To access a service online should feel like an added convenience - a better, easier way of engaging with us.
- 6.10 We'll also make sure that our services are **inclusive** and we will engage with equalities leads, customers and partners to ensure that all of our customers receive fair access to our services in line with our public sector equality duty.
- 6.11 In recognising our diverse customer profile, we are able to tailor our plans to ensure that our customers have a fair, open access to our services and to prevent those that need our services, from being excluded.
- 6.12 The inclusion work within the customer experience programmes will link in closely to our corporate commitment to equalities. We will treat our customers as individuals and be flexible in how we deliver our services, empowering our staff to make human decisions to provide adjustment and support.
- 6.13 Though we'll promote our services digitally, we will address digital exclusion and identify barriers to accessing our services upfront, and work hard to support our customers in overcoming these. We will provide tools, help, advice and environments that enable all customers to access our services. We will also sign post to agencies and partners that can support customers to develop new skills.
- 6.14 Our plans will be informed by **customer insight** analysis whereby we will look to review customer data, satisfaction and feedback to deliver customer led service improvements.
- 6.15 We will review our sources of customer data and seek to generate a consistent measure of customer experience across the authority. We will actively obtain

customer feedback and explore the opportunity to continually measure satisfaction through technology.

- 6.16 We will listen to our customers and involve them in our plans through direct engagement, survey or consultation, providing customer centred decision making.
- 6.17 We will review the way in which we manage our customer complaints, consistently recording them, treating them as opportunities to learn and then reviewing the trends and patterns to identify areas of focus and development. We will use this knowledge to design and re-engineer customer pathways and services to meet our customers' needs, as well as giving business areas direct accountability to the customer satisfaction within their business area.
- 6.18 Through a data plan, we will review what customer data we already collect, exploring further opportunities to measure customer experience. In this plan we will identify our data sources, link these to our customer experience standards and establish a consistent measure and view of customer satisfaction across the authority, irrespective of channel or business area. This will enable managers and staff to understand their own unique contribution to customer experience, understand their customers' needs and tailor their services to the feedback of our customers.
- 6.19 Whatever we do, we'll work hard to ensure that it is value **for money, efficient and offers a return on investment**. We are not immune to the financial pressures upon Local Government and the authority has a duty to manage public funds wisely.
- 6.20 Through a reduction in mediated contact, digitalisation and technology offers an opportunity to reduce our cost profile for some types of customer contact. This means that we can redistribute our resources to those customers, service areas or transactions that have the greatest need. There will be other benefits, such as an increase in customer satisfaction, a greater use of digital services and a more responsive, easier to access call centre. We will establish success criteria's with clear, time linked and measurable outputs of what is to be achieved.
- 6.21 Investment will be carefully managed to ensure that there is a clear business case and benefit, whether this is financial or experiential. For future investment we will establish a mechanism to ensure that our outputs will be measured and tracked against the forecasted benefits. Investment decisions will only be made where they continue to make business sense.

Work Streams

7.1 Drawing upon the vision and principles the strategy devolves into six core work streams.

Work Stream	Work Required	Outputs	Benefit	Corporate Lead(s)
Customer Service Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesign of the front of house / accommodation Review of the roles and team capability. Contact / customer service technology review. Review of organisations points of customer contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Customer Service Centre Self Service – front of house. New operating model. Application of new technology. Consolidation of points of contact. Profile of Customer Service Dept. raised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in human handling time from efficient processes (£) Migrated contact to self-service (£) Service able to respond to 21st century customer demands. Self-sustainable structure, driving continuous internal development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services
Workforce Development & Corporate Customer Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gap analysis between current position and requirement. Work to align required position to corporate HR frameworks. Wider organisational engagement / promotion and buy in. Establishment of Customer leads such 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of corporate Customer Experience Standards and capabilities. Adoption and adaption of corporate standards into capability / competency frameworks. Corporate launch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational cultural change. Every officer understands the Council's commitments to customer experience and their contribution to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mike Murphy – Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services

Work Stream	Work Required	Outputs	Benefit	Corporate Lead(s)
	as champions in each service area.			
Digitalisation Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of existing digitalisation programme. • Establishment of corporate governance / standards of digitalisation • Business analysis to identify scope of opportunity and progress against it. • Customer Experience (Digital) Mapping and audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalisation Road Map. • Reviewed Firmstep programme. • Channel Shift / migration plan. • Customer Experience (Digital) Target Operating Model. • My Account republish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in human handling time (£) • Digital channel becomes channel of choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services • Sam Outama – ICT Team Manager • Partner ICT Leads (i.e. RB Partnership)
Customer Insight & Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of information sources. • Establishment of information requirement. • Identification of where customer data can support decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data lead recommendation. • Data / customer insight ownership. • Responsive improvement cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of customer excellence. • Learning from mistakes, leading to genuine service transformation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services • Sam Outama – ICT Team Manager • Mike Murphy – Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Work Stream	Work Required	Outputs	Benefit	Corporate Lead(s)
Inclusion & Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality impact assessment. • Digital skills audit. • Establishment of inclusion partners and agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital inclusion planning. • Links to community support. • Opportunity to digitally up skill provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social society boost of digitally skilled adults. • Public sector equality duty met. • Choice leads to improved customer relations. • Ensures that everyone can access Local Government services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services • Mike Murphy – Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Returned Investment, Efficiency & Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit potential established. • Realised benefit captured. • Establish sources of data. • Tolerance levels defined. • Commercial opportunity identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit statement produced. • Target profile agreed. • Work streams linked to benefits. • Success criteria established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of why the programme has been undertaken. • Assessment of success criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Shardlow – Head of Customer Services • Tracy Bingham – Head of Finance

Governance & Approach

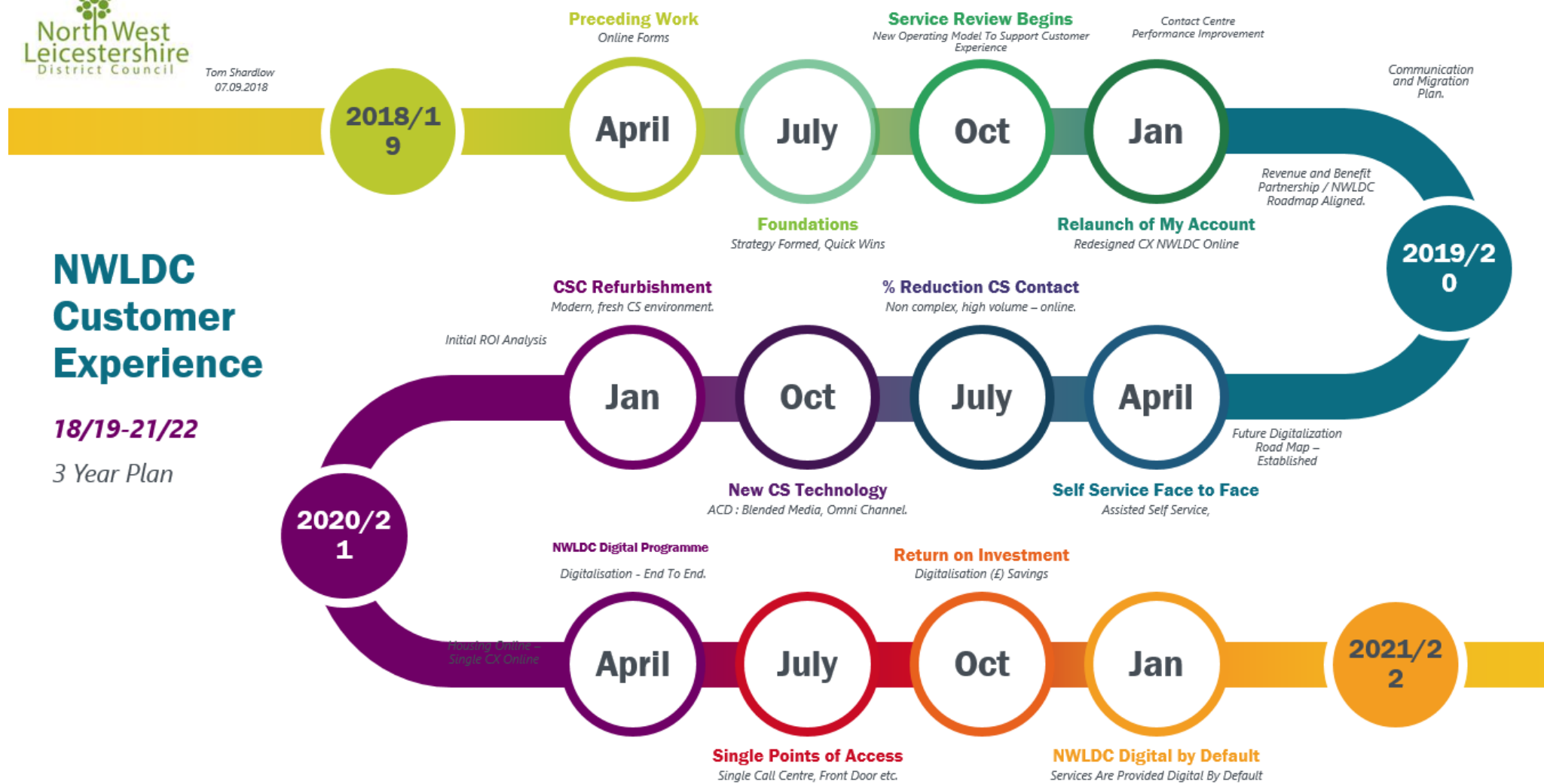
- 8.1 The lead officer for the strategy will be Tom Shardlow Head of Customer Services.
- 8.2 The strategy will be sponsored by Glyn Jones, Strategic Director for Housing and Customer Services and will report into the Corporate Portfolio Holder – Cllr Richard Blunt (Leader).
- 8.3 Where spend, investment or significant decision occurs this will be made in line with the Council's constitution / delegation of power.
- 8.4 In its delivery the Experience Strategy will operate a hierarchical governance model, reporting into a Customer Experience Board chaired by Glyn Jones, Strategic Director for Housing and Customer Services.
- 8.5 The board will seek advisories as required, from the extended project team: Communications, Finance, Legal Services, HR, Partner Organisations and Information Security.

Next Steps

- 9.1 The strategy will provide mandate to mobilise and establish the Customer Experience Board, with the associated work streams.
- 9.2 The programme will establish financial requirements at the mobilisation stages, with a view to securing reserve funding on a respective benefit / investment based business cases.
- 9.3 The strategy will seek to deliver incremental gains, at the earliest viable opportunity, with improvements to the customer experience being delivered as each piece of work concludes, generating a constantly evolving offer to the customer.
- 9.4 With customer demand, the local government landscape and technology changing at an ever accelerating pace the strategy is to be a working document, revisited periodically to plan for the next period. The strategy will next be reviewed in 2020.

Indicative / Illustrative Timeline

Tom Shardlow
07.09.2018



NWLDC Customer Experience

18/19-21/22

3 Year Plan