Small Business Friendly Approvals Project

Action Plan
2019/20 - 2021/22

Small Business Development Corporation
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Small Business Friendly
An initiative of the Small Business Development Corporation

City of Stirling
City of Choice

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Acknowledgement

The City of Stirling acknowledges the Wadjak People of the Nyoongar Nation, the traditional custodians of Mooro country and pays its respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging.

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1 Introduction

The Western Australian small business approvals process is complex and can be costly, time-consuming and confusing for applicants to navigate. Adding to these challenges are market pressures facing small businesses in the form of globalisation, on-line competition, on-demand services, reduced consumer spending and subdued economic conditions. To support small businesses in meeting these challenges, the City of Stirling is overhauling its approval processes to make it as simple and straightforward as possible for small businesses to start, grow and prosper in Stirling.

The Small Business Friendly Approvals Project is an initiative of the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) which aims to foster a successful small business environment by identifying local issues facing small businesses; designing reforms to achieve more streamlined approval processes; and supporting local governments to implement those reforms. The City of Stirling is the second local government to partner with the SBDC in producing an Action Plan to transform the small business approval processes.

> *This Action Plan will deliver **positive, lasting and sector-leading** approval process reforms to **make it easier for businesses to establish, operate and grow** in the City of Stirling.*

The reform initiatives detailed in this Plan are the result of a detailed dissection and extensive evaluation of the City's end-to-end approvals process across the entire organisation, covering every possible and actual City touchpoint and interaction with small business, from idea to inception and operation.

Implementing this Action Plan will –

- Contribute to the Strategic Community Plan (2018 – 2028) vision for the City as a place where people choose to live, work, visit and invest;
- Contribute to achievement of the following Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan (2018 – 2022) Key Result Area Outcomes:
  - Outcome E2: A great place to work, invest and do business
  - Outcome G3: Customer-focussed organisation
  - Outcome G4: Sustainable organisation
- Contribute to achievement of the City's Economic Development Vision of being a great place to invest and do business; offering an abundance of local employment; and making the most of the City's tourism potential (Economic & Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023);
- Enhance Council's influence in local economic development through red-tape reduction and streamlining the City's regulatory functions;
- Support local businesses to grow and prosper, in accordance with Strategy 2 of the City's Economic & Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023;
- Underpin the City's participation in the SBDC's Small Business Friendly Local Government initiative;
- Address the findings and recommendations of the report titled – Improvements to Development Services Business Unit Operations (June 2018) prepared by CSBA and Planning Context; and
- Proactively deliver on the three overarching goals of the State Government's Action Plan for Planning Reform.

2 Small Business Snapshot

Below is a snapshot of small business activities and approvals in the City of Stirling. For the purpose of this Action Plan, 'small businesses' are classified as those businesses with up to 19 employees.

This data provides a benchmark of current performance and will enable the City to measure the difference made by implementing the initiatives set out in this Action Plan over the coming years.

2.1 Sector Profile

Small business is BIG business in the City of Stirling –

- Accounting for 98% of the more than 22,000 businesses actively trading in the City;
- Employing an estimated 32,000 staff, representing almost 4% of the 889,000 people working in the greater Perth Metropolitan Region; and
- Contributing approximately $6 billion annually to Gross Regional Product, equating to almost 2.5% of Western Australia's Gross State Product of $259 billion.

For the City as a whole, the six highest employers by industry sector (below) account for almost two-thirds of all jobs in Stirling:

- Construction (15.2%)
- Retail Trade (13.6%)
- Healthcare & Social Assistance (12.9%)
- Education & Training (10.1%)
- Professional, Scientific & Professional Services (7.2%)
- Accommodation & Food Services (5.7%)

(Source: REMPLAN Economy)

2.2 Existing Business Support Initiatives

The City of Stirling offers many services and activities to support small business growth and prosperity. These include:

- Conducting regular surveys to understand business needs and expectations;
- Providing data on its website relating to business support services, sales and leasing opportunities, research information and links to free external information sources;
- Stirling Grants Finder – available through the City's website, enabling customers to search for government and corporate grants;
- North West Metro Localised – an external portal which helps connect local businesses and publicise business events, advice, networks and opportunities;
- City of Stirling activity and events sponsorship;
- Digital Marketing Workshops catering to over 100 business attendees;
- Bi-annual Procurement Workshops to familiarise local businesses with the City's procurement processes to improve their chances of becoming a supplier of goods or services to the City;
- City of Stirling support for the Stirling Business Centre / Stirling Business Alliance;
- Momentum Business Mentoring program, currently involving six Stirling businesses;
- Annual Stirling Business Awards to celebrate and showcase the achievements of local businesses;
- Distributing regular business E-newsletters to more than 40,000 recipients;
- Mayoral Business Breakfast and video presentation;
- Pamphlet distribution outlining available business support services;
- Produced Local Centre Economic Health Report to support future planning;
- Alfresco dining fees waived;
- Various place activation initiatives.

These initiatives are complemented by those offered by a network of other business advocacy and support providers such as SBDC, Stirling Business Association, Scarborough Beach Association, Inglewood on Beaufort, The Bend in the Road Inc., Main Street Co-op, and Beaufort Street Network.

In addition to these support services and activities, the City has also taken the following steps to improve its approvals process for the benefit of business customers:

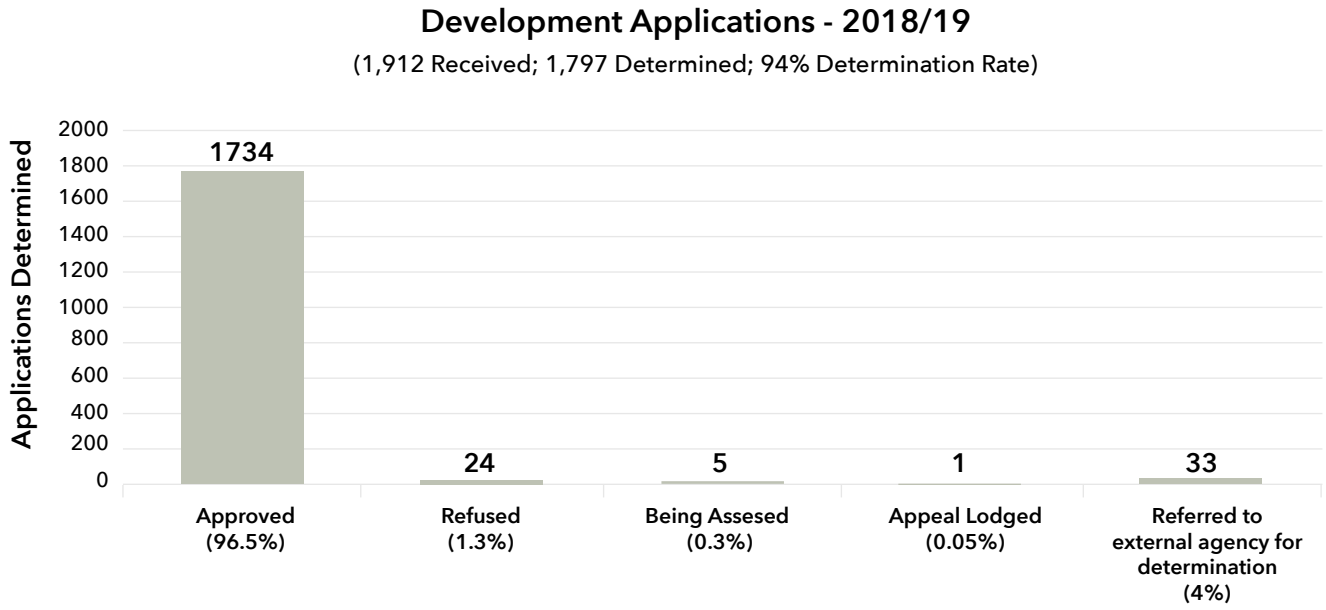
- Amendments to Local Planning Policy No. 6.7 – Parking and Access which will benefit Change of Use applications;
- New Footpath Trading and Activation Policy to reduce 'red tape' for businesses trading in the public realm;
- New Market Exemption Policy which may eliminate the need for some Change of Use applications;
- Draft Exemption from Requiring Development Approval Policy which may eliminate the need for business-related development applications in certain circumstances;
- Modified its Planning Scheme so that simple changes of use can occur in its town centres and retail strips without the need for a development application;
- Provision of Free Pre-Development Application Lodgement meetings; and
- Short Stay Accommodation Policy to establish clear requirements for affected businesses.

2.3 Development Applications

Below is a summary of development application statistics (residential and non-residential) for the 2018/19 financial year:

- **59%** of all development applications were lodged online, 24% were lodged in person at the front counter, and 17% were lodged by mail
- **96%** (1734) of all approvals were issued under delegated authority
- The average turnaround time for development applications was 64.25 working days
- **8%** (135) of all approvals were business-related. This figure excludes the following development application types:
  - » Applications for residential development;
  - » Applications requiring external referral and/or determination, such as Joint Development Assessment Panel, Department of Housing, (then) Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, Western Australian Planning Commission;
  - » Amendments and extensions of time to development approvals; and
  - » Unauthorised works
- **39%** (53) of all business-related approvals were for a Change of Use
- **87%** (118) of all business-related development applications required further information before being accepted by the City (Administration Officer request for information)
- **50%** (67) of all business-related development applications required further information after being accepted by the City (Planning Officer request for information)
- On average, business-related development applications that required further information were determined in 93 days, compared to an average of 54 days (42% reduction in time) for compliant applications that did not require further information
- Four development applications were 'called-in' for determination by Council, resulting in an estimated four-week extension in the timeframe for determination

(Source: City of Stirling)



2.4 Building Permit Applications

Below is a summary of building permit application statistics for the 2018/19 financial year:

- 1,903 certified building permit applications were received and 1,866 were determined, with an average turnaround time of 5 working days
- 766 uncertified building permit applications were received and 723 were determined, with an average turnaround time of 11 working days

(Source: City of Stirling)

2.5 Health Activities & Approvals

Below is a summary of environmental health statistics for the 2018/19 financial year:

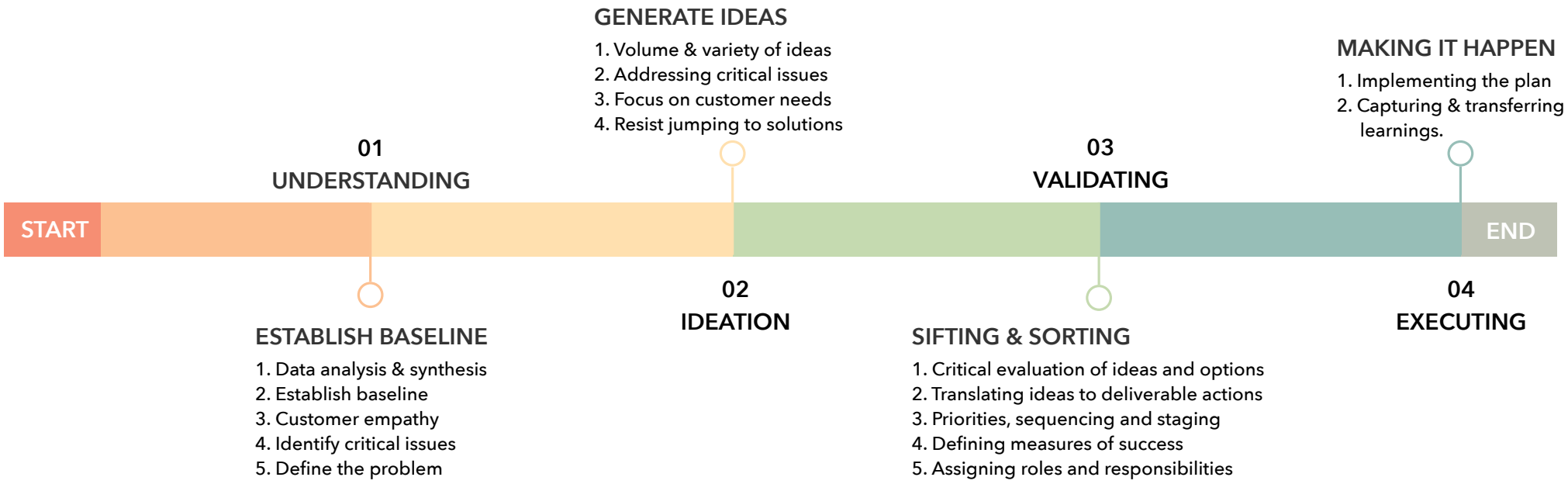
- **1,168** registered food businesses
- **228** food stall permits issued
- **42** liquor and gaming certificate applications
- **30** outdoor eating areas approved
- Food Safety training provided to more than **1,200** small business staff
- Average **3** working day turnaround for responding to development applications and building permit applications

(Source: City of Stirling)

3 Project Approach

This project was designed and delivered in close collaboration with the SBDC and City of Stirling Project Team, employing Human-Centred Design and Design Thinking principles.

The four stages of this project are illustrated below and are described in more detail in Appendix 1 – Summary Project Methodology.



The following key elements were embedded into this project approach to maintain a focus on business improvement and enhancing the small business customer experience.

3.1 Business Engagement

To better understand the perspective of small businesses in the City of Stirling, the Project Team engaged with three small business stakeholders, representing the business sectors of food and beverage / hospitality; building design and construction; and home-based business.

These small business stakeholders constructively shared their experiences of starting, running and growing a small business in Stirling, and provided rich feedback on what it's like to apply for a business-related approval from the City. This feedback was then tested and validated against everyday customer comments and concerns which the City's Customer Service staff shared in detail with the Project Team.

3.2 Customer-Centric

Customer-centricity is a way of doing business that focusses on creating a positive experience for the customer by optimising services and products and strengthening relationships. A customer-centric approach involves:

- Understanding the customer
- Building customer empathy into policies and processes
- Designing the customer experience
- Empowering frontline staff
- Measuring change using key metrics
- Using customer feedback to drive continuous improvement
- Anticipating and adapting to customer needs and expectations
- Sharing knowledge internally and integrating disparate business unit policies, processes and cultures

(Adapted from dynamicbusiness.com.au and gartner.com)

By adopting a customer-centric approach, the Project Team was able to identify problems and pressure-points in the City's existing approvals process. This revealed that small business customers need greater confidence and clarity throughout the process, and they need to quickly, easily and reliably find answers to the following questions at every approval gateway:

- What approvals do I need?
- What will or won't the City approve?
- What do I need to do?
- How much will it cost?
- How long will it take?
- Who will be consulted/involved?
- Who will make the decision?
- What are my chances?
- Where can I get more information?
- Will I get a different answer if I ask someone else?

The initiatives identified in this Action Plan have been developed to enhance the small business customer experience and better assist small business customers in obtaining answers to these questions.

3.3 Critical Thinking

The Project Team formulated a range of issues and questions to critically analyse the City's existing business approvals process and find ways to improve that process. These included –

a. Who are the City's small business customers? How do their needs differ depending on their type, maturity, sophistication, and lifecycle stage?
b. What does the current approvals process look like and how easy is it to navigate? How does it help or hinder business activity in Stirling?
c. What could the City start doing, stop doing and keep doing to improve the small businesses customer experience?
d. How can the City make it quicker and easier for small business customers to find the information they want and the answers they need?
e. How can the City save its customers and itself from unnecessary time, cost and effort associated with small business approvals?
f. How can the City reduce the turnaround time for small business approvals?
g. How can the City reduce red-tape while striking an appropriate balance between risk management and risk aversion?
h. Do small business customers know what to expect and what the City will accept?

3.4 End-to-End

The Project Team examined all City touchpoints with small business, across the full spectrum of possible and actual approvals and interactions, throughout the entire lifecycle of a small business.

> *This identified that **the small business customer journey begins when someone first has an idea to start a business**, not when they first approach the City or apply for approval. And, the **journey continues and changes over the life of a small business**, from commencement, through to daily operation and future growth.*

The initiatives detailed in this Action Plan will improve the complete end-to-end small business experience and enhance the City's reputation as a great place to invest and do business.

3.5 Measuring 'Bang for Buck'

Value for money, return on effort, and prioritisation of the many reform initiatives recommended in this Action Plan was critically and comprehensively assessed using five key criteria:

Impact

- How visible is this initiative?
- How much of a difference will it make?

Affordability

- Do we have or need resources to deliver this?
- What is the cost of doing nothing?
- What is the cost compared to other initiatives?

Alignment

- To what extent will the initiative achieve the defined purpose of making it easier to establish, operate and grow a small business in the City?
- Is the initiative a catalyst for or dependent on other actions?

Ease

- What people, time and resources are needed to deliver the initiative?
- Do we have the capability and capacity to successfully deliver the initiative?
- What is the effort versus reward of delivering this initiative compared to others?
- What is the simplicity versus difficulty of delivering this initiative compared to others?

Immediacy

- Can we do it now?
- What is the speed to delivery of this initiative?
- What is the time delay from implementation of this initiative to small businesses experiencing its positive impact?

4 Outcomes & Recommendations

4.1 Action Plan Overview

This Action Plan comprises:

1 Guiding Purpose

To make it easier for businesses to establish, operate and grow in the City of Stirling.

3 Key Focus Areas

Speed	Reduce timeframes and remove delays
Service	Make it easier for customers to get the information and answers they need
Simplicity	Reduce red-tape and improve clarity and understanding of the process

32 specific actions to achieve the Guiding Purpose, classified into 7 Reform Themes –

1. Improving the Customer Experience
2. System Enhancements
3. Improving Internal Referrals
4. Website Enhancements
5. Policy & Process Improvements
6. Culture, Communication & Cooperation
7. Effective Use of Resources

4.2 What Small Business Customers Said

Small business customers interviewed through this project told us:

- The City's business support services are valued by small business customers but could be more targeted to help customers understand the approvals process better.
- Small business customers appreciate interacting with positive City staff who communicate well and are willing to assist them throughout the approvals process.
- Small business customers desire greater clarity regarding the City's application requirements, assessment timeframes and approval processes.
- Navigating the approvals process can be costly, time-consuming and stressful, with customers often not knowing what to do next until they step through each individual approval gateway.
- The City should adopt a more customer-focussed, one-stop-shop approach to business applications and approvals in order to eliminate unnecessary delays and double-handling; provide a dedicated contact point for enquiries, updates and shepherding applications through the approvals process; and better coordinate internal actions and advice.
- Small business customers are happy to help themselves to information and find answers to their questions, but to do so requires those details to be easily identifiable, accessible and understandable.

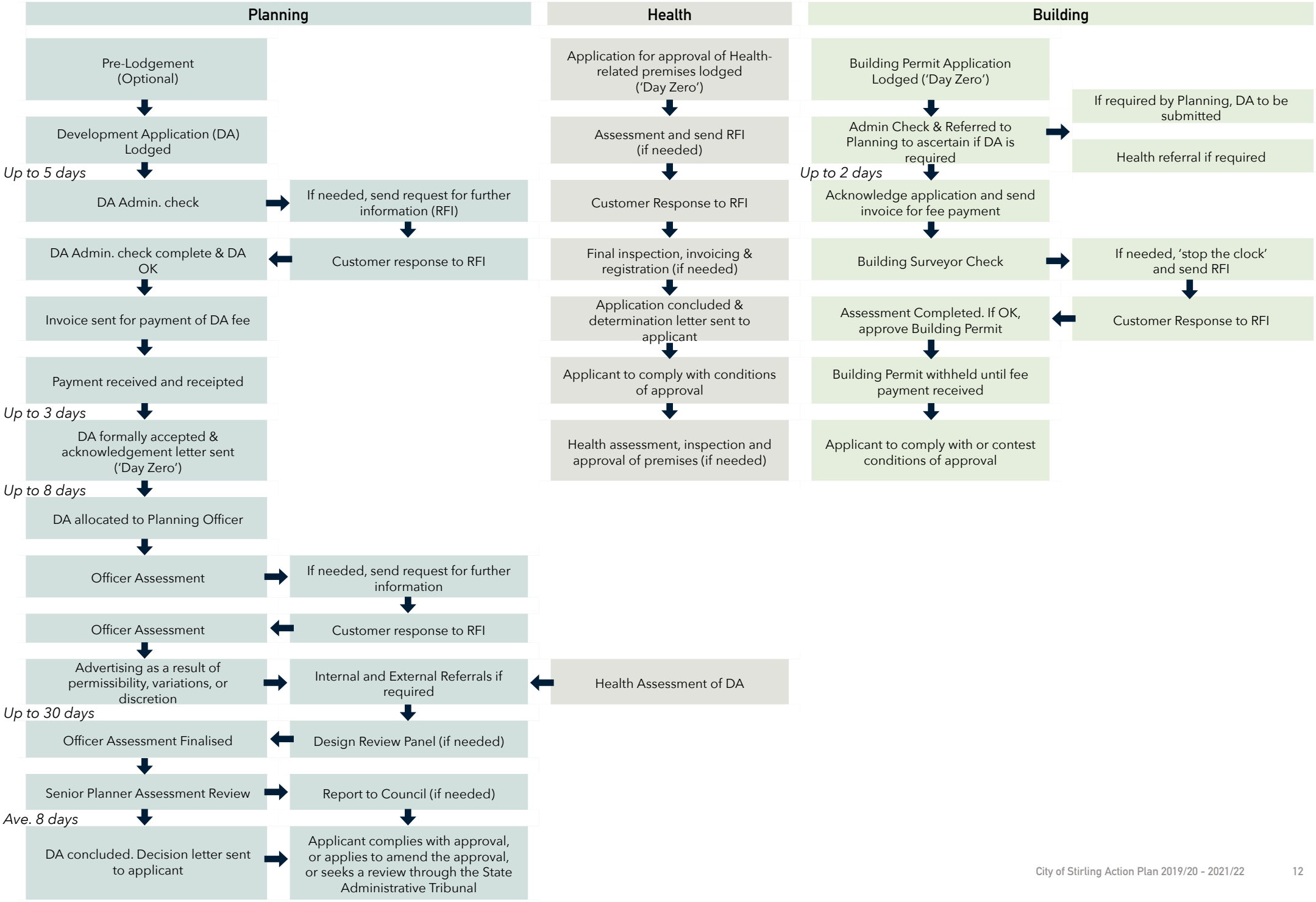
- Small business customers need to know what to expect before they embark on the application journey. To this end, the City needs to provide greater certainty, clarity, completeness of advice and co-ordinated decision-making.
- Ongoing requests for additional information throughout the approval process cause considerable delay, cost and frustration for customers. If specific information is needed to support an application, the City should ask for it early and ideally, ask only once.

4.3 Evaluating the current Approvals Process

A detailed analysis of the City's current approvals Process (see Fig. 1) has revealed that:

- The City's approvals Process is performing adequately and is supported by free services such as pre-lodgement and Design Review Panel meetings; a positive work ethic; and high level of discretionary effort by City staff. However the City's resources could be optimised by making the approvals process more efficient, in line with the City's commitment to continual improvement.
- The City adopts a proactive approach to decision-making with almost 100% of applications being approved and almost all of those being determined under delegated authority.
- The City's timely and effective processing of business-related proposals can be impacted by incomplete or inadequate applications; repeated requests for further information; delays in work allocation and internal referrals; double-handling of applications and submitted information; lack of internal coordination; and sequential rather than concurrent processing of applications. These characteristics contribute to a customer perception of siloed structures and systems, with limited cross-functional integration, coordination and collaboration.
- The City's approval process incorporates various checks and balances, such as tiered assessments; two-stage authorisation before decisions are made; and metrics that focus on approval timeframes and minimising customer complaints. Although these characteristics echo the City's commitment to risk management, they can inadvertently constrain the approvals process by introducing delays and duplicated effort. This, in turn, can decouple the nexus between accountability and authority at officer level; contribute to single-person dependencies; reinforce the perception of organisational silos; and become a source of frustration for customers who perceive the City's risk management approach as conservatism or risk aversion.
- Data is collected about various metrics throughout the approvals process, although several significant performance measures are not being recorded – such as time awaiting internal referral responses to applications; and time awaiting customer response to requests for information.
- Much of the information and answers that small business customers need to successfully navigate the City's approvals process already exists on the City's website or in internal procedures and checklists. However, this information is either difficult to find, inaccessible to the customer (and other City staff that need to know), or indecipherable to anyone other than a subject matter expert.
- The City's on-line lodgement system is well used with almost 60% of development applications lodged on-line, although this figure belies its cumbersome customer interface compared to many other on-line lodgement systems.
- Introduction of the City's new Relationship Management System (RMS) provides an ideal opportunity to implement many of the approval process reforms outlined in this Action Plan.
- The reform initiatives proposed in this Action Plan will dramatically improve the City's approvals process and will provide a more positive, seamless and cohesive small business customer experience.

Fig. 1 – Overview of the City's current Small Business Approvals Process



1. Improving the Customer Experience

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
1.1 Produce and distribute a business welcome pack, comprising: • The vision to support business in the City; • A single page summary / ready-reckoner outlining what to expect when they apply for approval; • A calendar of business support events, including new information sessions about doing business with or getting approvals from the City.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Build customer familiarity with and use of available tools, information and City contacts to support them in their small business journey. • Electronic information pack to reduce costs. • Targeted workshops to better equip small business customers in their interactions with the City, such as 'Meet the City' information sessions and 'How to start a food business in the City of Stirling'.	✓	✓	✓ (Ongoing)	**Lead:** Economic Development **Support:** Development Services, Environmental Health, Customer & Communications
1.2 Provide simple, easy-to-understand information and application roadmaps for different business types. Information to be presented in a variety of formats for ease of customer use, including videos/animations.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Enable small business customers to quickly and easily obtain only the information and answers they need in respect of their proposal and nothing they don't. • Adopting a customer-focussed structure, style and content will save customer time and remove uncertainty surrounding the approval process and requirements for different business types.		✓	✓	**Lead:** Planning & Development
1.3 Better utilise the Customer Reception area to enhance face-to-face interactions.	✓				✓		✓	✓	• Enhanced 'in-person' customer experience. • Improved navigability for customers attending the City's Office. • A more welcoming customer environment	✓	✓		**Lead:** Customer & Communications **Support:** Development Services
1.4 Investigate fixed nominal planning fees for certain types of applications.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Fixed application fees for certain types of development applications would be less than the maximum prescribed fees currently charged by the City. • Eliminating the need to calculate fees based on the cost of the development will streamline the City administrative processes, reduce customer costs, and enhance the City's ability to receive an application and fee payment in a single transaction.		✓		**Lead:** Development Services
1.5 Investigate reducing or removing additional (non-Planning) costs/fees associated with the development application process.	✓		✓			✓		✓	• Reduce customer costs and perceived 'hidden' fees in the assessment and approvals process.			✓	**Lead:** Development Services
1.6 Monitor and revise (where required) customer-facing communications and correspondence to accord with the City's plain English writing guideline.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	• Reducing or removing the use of jargon, embracing 'Plain English' writing techniques, and writing to inform not to impress. • Enhancing the City's communication and relationship with small business customers. • Increasing customer understanding and knowledge of the City's small business approvals process.		✓	✓	**Lead:** Customer & Communications **Support:** Development Services

2. System Enhancements

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
2.1 Provide a simple online lodgement experience, which allows customers to register, lodge and pay in a single transaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Make it easier for customers to lodge applications online and pay their application fee in a single transaction, rather than the inconvenience of making a separate payment (as is currently the case).		✓	✓	**Lead:** Corporate Information Services **Support:** Planning & Development; Finance Services
2.2 Improve data collection to accurately record how many days development applications are 'active' versus 'dormant'. In the meantime, better utilise existing data to record and report on the number of days the City is awaiting a customer response to RFI.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	• Monitor, follow-up and assist customers who have not yet responded to RFIs. • Ensure that internal performance measures accurately reflect the time that applications are 'active' with the City.	✓			**Lead:** Corporate Information Services **Support:** Planning & Development
2.3 Investigate faster returns and refunds of customer payments where applicable (such as bonds).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Eliminate existing delays in processing customer refunds.		✓		**Lead:** Finance Services; Corporate Information Services **Support:** Planning & Development
2.4 Ensure rollout of the City's Relationship Management System (RMS) in Development Services supports the actions outlined in this Plan.	✓	✓			✓		✓		• RMS is integrated with new or updated practices and processes recommended in this Plan. • Efficient use of new RMS resource. • RMS complements and enables the timely and effective implementation of actions identified in this Plan.		✓	✓	**Lead:** Customer & Communications **Support:** Planning & Development; Corporate Information Services

3. Improving Internal Referrals

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
3.1 Review Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with other teams and business units, including: • Updating SLAs for currency and to reflect desired service standards; • Ensuring SLAs are being adhered to; • Ensuring all business units use core systems; • Monitoring and reporting on referral response times.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Ensure that referral responses are provided in a timely and effective fashion to avoid causing delays in the approvals process.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development **Support:** Infrastructure
3.2 Define and document internal referral requirements, including: • Clarifying what needs to be referred, to whom, when and why? • Eliminating the need for Health referrals of subdivision applications in most cases; • Investigating the opportunity for referral responses to be provided by Admin staff and/or junior technical officers in the case of certain low-risk development and building permit applications.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Greater certainty, clarity and consistency surrounding internal referral requirements, for customers and staff alike. • Avoiding delays caused by unnecessary referrals of applications.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development
3.3 Review Planning and Building workflows to ensure that referrals occur as early as possible in the application process.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Early internal and external referral of applications has the potential to reduce the timeframe for approvals by up to 30 days. • By the time the application is allocated to the relevant officer for assessment, they will receive all relevant information and referral responses required to assess and determine the application in a timely fashion.		✓		**Lead:** Corporate Information Services **Support:** Development Services

4. Website Enhancements

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
4.1 Enhance website useability for customers through: • Improving search functionality; • Presenting information based on the customer's desired actions (e.g. I want to…); • Application roadmap and information filtering to de-clutter and simplify the customer's view and navigability (e.g. 'you are here'); • Step-by-step information; • Showing the full process to give the customer line-of-sight on what to expect; • 'Testing' structure and content with business customers.	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	• Improve website navigability for customers. • Produce application roadmaps for specific classes of businesses so that customers know what to expect before embarking on their small business approvals journey. • Provide quick, easy and intuitive access to the information and answers that small business customers need.		✓	✓ Ongoing	**Lead:** Marketing & Communications **Support:** Planning & Development, Corporate Information Services
4.2 Create a new online self-assessment application process for signage.	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	• Reduce red-tape and make it quicker and easier for customers to apply for and generate their own signage approvals on-line.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development **Support:** Marketing & Communications, Corporate Information Services
4.3 Review website author controls and website content to ensure accurate information and timely updates are provided for customers.	✓			✓				✓	• Access to current, accurate and relevant information. • Ensuring that subject matter experts across the organisation are trained in and aware of their web author privileges to ensure website content is always up to date.		✓		**Lead:** Marketing & Communications **Support:** Planning & Development
4.4 Increase the functionality of IntraMaps by making more information/ layers publicly visible.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Increase the breadth and depth of map-based data that is freely available to customers in a single location, via the City's IntraMaps. • Support small business customers to make informed property and development decisions.		✓		**Lead:** Corporate Information Services **Support:** Planning & Development
4.5 Improve the City's online customer application tracking system through: • Providing 'micro-event' status updates as applications progress through the process; • Possible use of flags, alerts, and progress bars etc; • Updating online customer DA tracking to reflect receipt of amended plans and other relevant events that are not currently recorded.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Provide greater visibility for customers around the progress of their application through more timely, accurate and specific information and status updates.		✓		**Lead:** Corporate Information Services **Support:** Planning & Development

5. Policy & Process Improvements

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
5.1 Broaden fast-track application stream, supported by: • Prescription around information / application requirements; • Clarity around assessment and process requirements for different application types; and • Introduction of service standards for fast-track applications.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Increase the nature and number of applications processed in the shortest time possible. • Greater certainty for customers around application requirements in order to meet fast-track standards. • Greater clarity and consistency around processes, timeframes and outcomes for fast-track applications.	✓	✓		**Lead:** Development Services **Support:** City Planning
5.2 Ensure that new and amended Local Planning Policies streamline the approvals process and align with the three Key Focus Areas of Service, Speed and Simplicity.			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	• Establish a more simplified, streamlined and agile policy framework that better responds to contemporary and emerging issues facing small business customers. • Policies will be prioritised appropriately and fit-for-purpose due to the involvement of assessing officers.		✓	✓	**Lead:** City Planning **Support:** Development Services
5.3 As part of the annual review of delegations, review delegations to: • Align with the three Key Focus Areas of Service, Speed and Simplicity; • Investigate expanding authority to Planning Officers and Building Surveyors to determine certain types of applications;		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Ensure that delegations of authority are oriented to deliver improved service, speed and simplicity for small business customers. • Increase the number of officers that can determine applications, thereby dramatically reducing approval timeframes. • Empowering staff and attaching accountability commensurate with authority at all decision-making levels.	✓	✓		**Lead:** Development Services **Support:** Governance
5.4 Earlier allocation of development applications as soon after lodgement as possible.		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Potential reduction of approval timeframes by around 8 days (average) per application. • Provide small business customers with more immediate notification of the officer responsible for their application.	✓			**Lead:** Development Services
5.5 Improve coordination of site meetings and sharing of information from those meetings.	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Avoid repeat, follow-up inspections and the sporadic or late identification of issues and concerns regarding the application. • Ensure all City staff with some involvement or influence in the application process are party to the same discussions relating to the proposal. • Provide greater transparency and accountability regarding multi-disciplinary inputs into the application process. • Enable small business customers to contemporaneously address or correct questions and concerns raised in respect of their proposal.	✓			**Lead:** Planning & Development **Support:** Infrastructure
5.6 Concurrent Planning and Health approval process for certain categories of application (e.g. change of use / home business).	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	• Potential reduction of approval timeframes by around 3 days (average) per application. • Eliminate the need for customers to lodge sequential applications for small business approvals.		✓		**Lead:** Development Services; Environmental Health
5.7 Investigate voluntary deemed-to-comply check from Planning Minister's Action Plan (Item C7) on a fee-for-service basis for – single houses, patios, additions and alterations.	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	• Deemed-to-comply check will furnish small business customers with specialist and specific advice about whether and how their proposal could be modified to achieve greater compliance, thus potentially avoiding the need for certain City approvals.		✓		**Lead:** Development Services
5.8 Introduce an Exempted Development Local Planning Policy to remove the need for approval of minor developments.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	• Expand the range of developments that are exempt from the need to obtain development approval. • Fewer development applications will increase the City's assessment capacity and reduce approval timeframes for each development application that is still required.	✓			**Lead:** City Planning **Support:** Development Services

6. Culture, Communication & Co-Operation

Ideas	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
6.1 Provide clear guidance on how to equitably and effectively manage complaints/ complainants, supported by a whole-of-organisation procedure endorsed by management.	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	• Provide greater clarity and consistency for the effective management of customer complaints. • Redefine customer, Council Member and organisational expectations for complaints management. • More effective use of City resources. • Provide an improved experience for customers raising concerns and complaints.	✓	Reassess the City's performance after 12 months of operation under the new procedure		**Lead:** Customer & Communications
6.2 Establish a repository of information (knowledge articles, training materials etc) – written in plain English, stored in one accessible location, reviewed regularly, with ownership assigned.	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	• Access to up-to-date and easy-to-understand information. • Improve knowledge-sharing and information dissemination across the organisation. • Improve staff access to information. • Ensure greater consistency, predictability and confidence in the information and advice provided to small business customers.	✓	Ongoing	Ongoing	**Lead:** Customer & Communications
6.3 Recognise and celebrate (internally and externally) the good work and process improvements being done across the organisation.	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	• Improve staff morale and the City's reputation as a great place to do business and invest. • Improve Administration's relationship with Council. • Foster a 'can-do' culture underpinned by a commitment to do better.	✓	Ongoing	Ongoing	**Lead:** Planning & Development Directorate **Support:** Customer & Communications; Human Resources

7. Effective Use Of Resources

Action Item	Key Focus Area			'Bang for Buck'					Small Business Customer Benefit	Now (2019/20)	Soon (2020/21)	Later (2021/22)	Responsibility
	Service	Speed	Simplicity	Ease	Impact	Immediacy	Alignment	Affordability					
7.1 Establish a Customer Concierge Team sourced from within existing resources across the Planning & Development Directorate, with functions including: • Single point of customer contact; • Customer liaison and handover; • Overseeing the City's small business approvals processes; • Manage Development Services mailbox.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	• Dedicated single point for customer contact regarding all small business approvals. • Centralised customer concierge for small business proposals requiring multiple approvals or multiple referral responses for a single approval. • Multi-disciplinary, para-technical team responsible for coordinating workflows and overseeing the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's small business approvals process. • Reduce the administrative workload burden on technical officers, thereby increasing the City's assessment capacity and reducing approval timeframes. • Eliminate existing single-person dependencies by improving and centralising customer concierge functions.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development **Support:** Human Resources
7.2 Improve coordination and sharing of resources between City Planning and Development Planning Services.	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	• Timely and coordinated policy development. • Ensures that officers responsible for implementing planning policies are closely involved in the preparation and review of those policies.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development **Support:** Human Resources
7.3 Consider a service model that has technical officers from various teams located in Development Services.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	• Provide a complete 'one-stop-shop' under the Planning & Development Directorate for virtually all small business approvals. • Dedication of this additional resource within the Planning & Development Directorate will reduce engineering referral response times, which in turn will reduce approval timeframes.		✓		**Lead:** Planning & Development; Infrastructure **Support:** Human Resources

APPENDIX 1 – Summary Project Methodology

Introduction

LK Advisory developed a bespoke methodology for the City of Stirling's Small Business Friendly Approvals Project. This methodology comprised the four stages summarised below, which blended elements of CoThink academy's RATIO model (available here – https://www.cothinkacademy.com/problem-solving-methods/ratio-model/) with principles of Human-Centred Design and Design Thinking.

Stage 1 – Understanding

The purpose of this stage was three-fold – to develop an understanding of customer needs; define the City's current level of performance; and document and analyse the City's approvals process and practices to identify opportunities for improvement.

In this stage, the Project Team focussed on understanding the needs of the City's small business customers; sourcing and evaluating all available data; mapping the customer journey and lifecycle; defining the 'problem statement' the team was seeking to resolve; and identifying the critical issues/questions to be addressed in doing so. Key considerations during this Stage included –

- Being conscious of and neutralising the Project Team's attachment bias to the City's existing approvals process and practices.
- Establishing a profile of the City's small businesses, including the number and type of small businesses in the City; the number of people they employ; what contribution they make to the local economy/community; and what they need from the City's approval process.
- Analysing all available data/metrics regarding the City's current small business relationship, performance, touchpoints, applications and approvals.
- Evaluating the amount and type of work that small businesses generate for the City and which the City generates for small businesses, and critically assessing the value that is (or is not) added by that work.
- Interrogating the City's current approvals process and examining the resultant 'end-to-end' customer experience.

Stage 2 – Ideation

During this stage, the Project Team spent considerable time generating ideas to address the needs and critical issues identified in Stage 1. Project Team discussions were carefully facilitated to resist the urge to leap to solutions and maintain a focus on generating, rather than evaluating ideas.

Questions used during this stage to prompt discussion, challenge the status quo and generate ideas included:

- What if?
- How to?
- So what?
- Who said?
- Why not?

Stage 3 – Validating

Stage 3 involved rigorous testing and evaluation of ideas generated in Stage 2; translating ideas to actions; sorting and prioritising actions; defining measures of success; and assigning roles and responsibilities.

Key components of this Stage included:

- Defining the customer benefits of each action;
- User experience design and testing of recommended actions;
- Ensuring that ideas addressed the critical issues and contribute to addressing the problem statement; and
- Critically evaluating the 'bang for buck' of each recommended action.

Stage 4 – Executing

This stage is characterised by preparation of this Action Plan and implementation of the recommended actions following endorsement by the City of Stirling.

The recommendations contained in this Action Plan and documentation of their anticipated customer benefits will enable the City of Stirling to measure and report on the success of progressively implementing this Plan over the coming years.

Small Business Development Corporation

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Small Business Friendly

An initiative of the Small Business Development Corporation

City of Stirling

City of Choice

Produced by:

LK ADVISORY