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Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Comments, Compliments and Complaints



Responsibility:	Customer Services Manager
Date First Signed off:	November 2007
Review Date:	2010
Review Frequency:	Every three years, or as required

Policy Objectives

- To encourage feedback from our customers in order to:
 - o Identify and improve, where possible, Council systems or processes which led to customer dissatisfaction
 - o Identify instances of excellence in customer service provided by Council staff and celebrate high quality performance
 - o Provide an easy avenue for customers to raise any problems they have experienced with Council

Principles

- Customers will be treated with genuine empathy, courtesy, patience, honesty and fairness.
- Staff expect to be treated in a civil and polite manner.
- Only the person or people directly involved can lodge a service complaint, except as deemed appropriate by the Customer Services Manager
- Where the complaint is about a decision taken by Council, and another right of appeal process exists, that process shall take precedence e.g. parking ticket disputes, dog infringements, planning applications decisions.
- The complaints procedure shall not apply where legal action is being taken.

Definitions

Service Request

"A service request is a notification by a customer to Council of work that is required to meet Council's core responsibilities."

Guidance Note: *A service request is not a complaint e.g. to fix a pothole. Service requests are recorded by the NCS Service Request System and routed on to the responsible officer. Response times vary according to the nature of the request.*

Complaint

"A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction resulting from a perceived failure on Council's part to carry out its duties / or complete its work in a way that is in accordance with accepted standards and agreed levels of service."

Guidance Notes:

A complaint typically will be on how Council has undertaken its duties, such as an allegation that:

- 1. there has been a failure to follow Council policies or procedures*
- 2. an employee is unhelpful or insensitive, showing malice or unfair discrimination to a customer*
- 3. the answer to a query or response to a request for service has been delayed unreasonably*
- 4. where action or lack of reasonable action by Council has directly resulted in damage to property or injury to a person*
- 5. where the quality of work done or service provided by Council fails to meet agreed standards*

Informal complaint

"An informal complaint is one which is able to be resolved immediately by the relevant staff member, resulting in closure of the matter".

Formal complaint

"A formal complaint is one that staff have not been able to resolve when first notified of the dissatisfaction, or where the customer has stated that they wish to lay a complaint."

At the informal stage, a complaint should be resolved quickly by the relevant staff within the Group concerned. If it is unable to be resolved, a formal complaint can be lodged. A response will be undertaken as soon as possible within 5 working days.

Comment

A comment is a suggestion by a customer that can be used to improve business procedures or practices.

A comment may be recorded but does not require a formal response, unless requested.

Compliment

A compliment is a positive comment on a Council service or employee

A compliment should be recorded for performance purposes, and celebrated by the relevant Group or Section.

Policy Statement

1. Lodging a comment, compliment or complaint

Comments, compliments or complaints can be registered by telephone, email, in writing or by completing a form available on the Council website or at Customer Service desks. They should be addressed to the Customer Services Manager.

2. Response times

Comments will be responded to, if requested, within 10 working days. Informal complaints will be resolved immediately. Formal complaints will be acknowledged within 2 days by the Customer Services Manager and responded to within 5 working days by the relevant Section Head or Group Manager.

NB: These response times are not related to general service requests.

3. Process

The Customer Services Manager will provide a central point of contact for comments, compliments and complaints, ensure the details are recorded for statistical purposes, and then distribute to the appropriate Section Head. Section Heads are responsible for responding to the customer within the timeframe and closing off complaint forms on the Service Request System. If the matter is not resolved, the customer may appeal to the Group Manager, CEO or Mayor. If a complaint is not actioned within 5 working days by the Section responsible, it will escalate to the appropriate Group Manager.

Complaints will be analysed and actions taken where necessary to resolve the issue. This may include, but is not limited to, changes to systems, procedures and/or services provided. Actions that require additional resources, (not accommodated within existing budgets) will be forwarded to the appropriate Group Manager or Chief Executive for a decision on how to progressing. Where suggested changes conflicts with another policy, the Group Manager or Chief Executive will decide on the appropriate action. The Customer Services Manager will collate and record overdue complaints on a monthly basis for Group Managers.

All compliments will be passed to the relevant staff/Section and where appropriate, noted in the performance appraisal form.

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