

POL 0019: Complaint Handling

Purpose

The policy sets the guidelines with regard to handling customer complaints ensuring that the Shire of Esperance -

1. Recognises, promotes and protects the customer's right to comment on their dealings with the Shire of Esperance;
2. Provides for natural justice and procedural fairness to ensure that the Shire officer is able to respond to any complaint and is not subject to unfair, unfounded or inappropriate allegations;
3. Provides an efficient, fair and accessible framework for resolving customer complaints;
4. Sets standard for dealing with customer complaints;
5. Increases the level of satisfaction among customers through the delivery of effective and consistent services; and
6. Enhances the Shire's image and reputation, particularly its reputation for customer service.

Scope

This policy relates to customer complaints only.

The Shire's Dealing with Difficult People policy provides a guide for handling behavioural incidents.

Definitions

Complaint: a grievance against a process or the quality of service that a customer receives when dealing with the Shire (i.e. poor customer service, inappropriate staff behaviour etc.)

Service Request: a request for the Shire to undertake certain works or rectify a particular problem (i.e. notification of a pot hole in road; dangerous tree branches; stray dogs/livestock etc.).

*Service requests are lodged through the Customer Request Management (CRM) system and directed to the relevant Officer for action as soon as they are received.

Practice

A complaint can be received either -

1. in writing;
2. in person;
3. by telephone; or
4. by email.

All complaints must be recorded in the Shire's record management system for record keeping purposes.

Anonymous and vexatious complaints may not be investigated as it is not possible to undertake due process to ensure procedural fairness.

Commitment

1. All complaints will be handled quickly, fairly, effectively and courteously and in a manner which ensures natural justice and due process.
2. Responses should always be in positive terms and never retaliatory.
3. The rights of complainants are protected as are those of staff who receive a complaint, or who may be subject of a complaint.

Record Keeping

1. The Shire's record management system will be used to record all Customer complaints.
2. As soon as a complaint is received, a copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the relevant Manager who will monitor the process.
3. The physical record of all complaints and supporting documentation will be recorded in the Shire's Records Management System to allow for accountability and audit.

Responsibility

1. All staff are charged with the responsibility of dealing with customer complaints in a courteous manner and to provide customers with information on the Shire of Esperance's complaint handling policy.
2. Staff have a responsibility to record all customer complaints and incidents in compliance with this policy.
3. All issues should be referred to the relevant Manager/Director who will assign the investigation to an appropriate Officer. In some instances it may be appropriate to engage someone external to the organisation to conduct the investigation. This will be a decision of the Executive Management Team.
4. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing, detailing the action to be taken, within 5 working days.
5. Complaints which are unresolved after 5 working days will be referred back to the relevant Manager.
6. Complaints which are unresolved after 15 working days will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

Verbal Complaints

Complaints received in person or by telephone will be handled by the staff member receiving the complaint if possible, or be referred to someone who can resolve the matter. Verbal complaints which are resolved immediately must be recorded in the Shire's record management system and actioned to the relevant Manager/Director.

When the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, the complaint will be managed as for a written complaint.

Written Complaints

Complaints received by letter, email or feedback form will be forwarded to the relevant Manager or Director for resolution. The Chief Executive Officer will be notified of any complaint of a serious nature involving inappropriate behaviour of staff (rudeness, discrimination or harassment).

Response to the Complainant

The complainant will be advised of receipt of the complaint within 5 working days. After the complaint has been investigated and a resolution agreed to, the complainant will be notified.

Empowering Staff

All staff will have access to the complaint handling policy.

All staff will be made aware of updates to the policy.

Where possible staff will receive training in aspects of customer service relevant to this policy, including the differentiation between complaints and service requests.

Monitoring Customer Complaints

The Records Coordinator shall be responsible for -

1. Monitoring all Customer complaints and ensuring their completion.
2. Reporting to the Executive Management Team monthly on complaints lodged.

.....End.....

Document Information

Responsible Position	Manager Financial Services
Risk Rating	Low

Referencing Documents

- *Local Government Act 1995*

Revision History

Date	Version	CM Reference	Reason for Change	Resolution #	Next Review
Aug 2010	1	D12/23	New policy	O0810-1498	Aug 2012
Aug 2015	2		Removal of Customer Feedback Form (to be included in Supplementary Management Practices document.)	O0815-010	Aug 2017
Mar 2018	3	D16/28992	Minor changes, update document controller	O0318-073	Mar 2020
Aug 2018	4	D16/28992[v2]	Change title name and rewording to include unacceptable behaviour	O0818-091	Aug 2020
Jan 2020	5	D16/28992[v3]	Remove references to behavioural incidents as this is included in the new Dealing	O0120-013	Jan 2022

			with Difficult People policy. Wording changes to make clear and remove reference to feedback form as this is not used.		
Jan 2022	6	D16/28992[v4]	Update responsible officer. Minor grammatical changes.	O0222-033	Jan 2024
Dec 2023	7	D16/28992[v5]	Biennial Review. No change.	O1223-202	Dec 2025
Jan 2026	8	D16/28992[v6]	Biennial Review. No change.	O0126-016	Jan 2028