



Compliments, Complaints and Requests for Service Policy

1 Introduction

1.1.1 Purpose

The Council is committed to the delivery of quality services to meet the needs of its customers in line with our levels of service, outlined in the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan. The Council welcomes feedback from customers as this provides opportunities for learning and improving services, in addition to recognising excellence in service.

1.1.2 Scope

Customers are encouraged to:

Provide feedback, compliments, suggestions or complaints

Make a request for service to resolve an issue

The Council will resolve complaints in a fair, timely and confidential manner in order to achieve positive outcomes for customers and staff.

2 Policy

2.1.1 Definition of a complaint

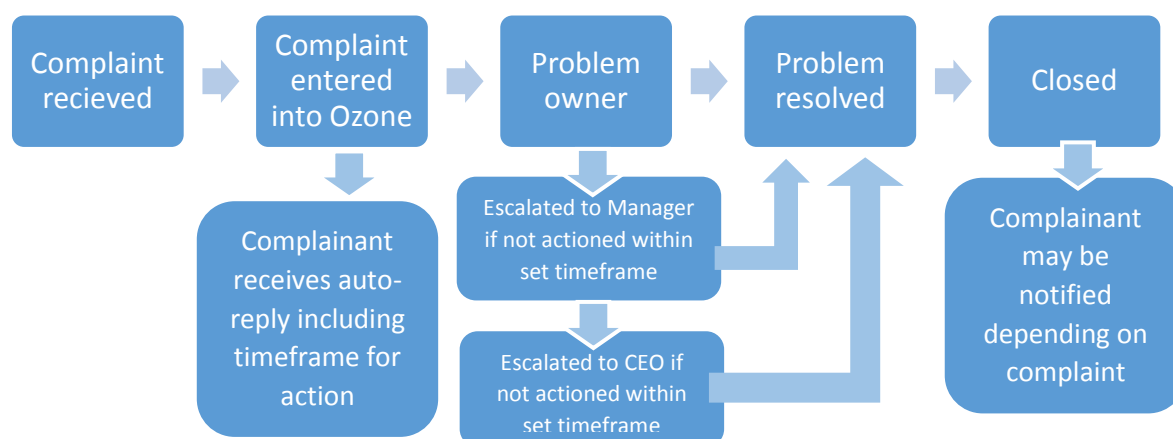
A complaint is defined as follows –

Any expression of dissatisfaction about the Council service or action of a staff member that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact.” Examples include:

- Taking too long to take action or failing to take action
- Not following policy or rules
- Not making a decision in the prescribed way
- Giving wrong or misleading information
- A member of staff failing to deliver on a commitment made.

Every effort will be made to resolve issues as quickly as possible at the first point of contact.

The resolution of a customer request will be managed as follows:



2.1.2 Definition of a Request for Service (RFS)

A request for perform a service, such as infrastructure or facilities maintenance. Requests for service involves Council infrastructure or assets.

Request for Service do not include application for resource consents, building consents, advertising sign consents, liquor licenses or other such applications made to Council by private parties.

Request for Service include but are not limited to:

- Maintenance or repair of council's roads or footpaths, including streetlights and traffic signs
- Maintenance or repair of council's potable water, stormwater and effluent systems
- Clean up graffiti on Council assets
- Maintenance of Council's public spaces such as bathrooms, parks and boating facilities
- Removal of litter
- Request for improvements to Council services such as new streetlights or signs
- Emergency repair of Council assets

2.1.3 Exceptions

Although it is intended that all issues will be dealt with under this process, there may be exceptions that arise as a result of other processes of review or statute. Possible examples:

- Complaints that are criticisms or disagreement with Council policy or decisions
- Complaints that constitute a disagreement with or refusal to accept matters that the Council is obliged or required by statute to apply
- A complaint where the customer or Council has started legal proceedings or has taken court action
- A complaint that has already been heard by a court or tribunal
- Insurance claims
- Any other complaint where another formal process has been commenced
- Where another formal complaint process exists, e.g. statutory requirement
- Where a formal right of appeal already exists

The management of such complaints falls outside this policy, with each situation suitable managed given all the circumstances.

2.1.4 Monitoring

As indicated above, all complaints will be investigated (and if need be prioritised) and dealt with in confidence, consistent with the needs of the investigation. To enable the Council's policy to be adequately reviewed and revised, monitoring of our compliance with the policy will be undertaken.

The information will be used to produce management information to monitor our performance, highlight areas of failure and feed into the process for identifying areas for service improvements. The information will be reported to Council's Leadership Team on a monthly basis.

2.1.5 Informing the public and staff

The Compliments, Complaints and Request for Service Policy will be publicised through the Council's website. All staff will be made aware of the Compliments, Complaints and Request for Service Policy.

2.1.6 Responsibility and Review

The Compliments, Complaints and Request for Service Policy is the responsibility of the Community Services Manager and subject to review annually.

3 Procedure

3.1.1 Making a Complaint

A customer (or their representative) can make a complaint in person, by visiting the Customer Service desk at Council, during normal business hours, or by telephone, letter, email or via our website. Please include your name and contact details to allow a response. (If your details are not provided we cannot provide a response). All complaints regarding the Building Control Authority Function or the conduct of staff must be lodged in writing.

3.1.2 Responding to Complaints

Issues will be responded to as quickly as possible by the most appropriate method. Where a response or resolution is made by telephone, written records will be kept. This will cover:

- Details of the investigation
- The outcome (e.g. whether the complaint is upheld, action taken, apology, or reason why the Council is unable to assist)
- Information on the right of further redress and escalation if the customer remains dissatisfied.
- These details will be provided to the complainant on request.

3.1.3 Extending Complaint response times

Issues of a more complex nature may take longer than the specified time limits to investigate. If this is the case, the customer will be informed of the reasons why the time scales cannot be met and when they can expect to receive a full response.

3.1.4 Complaints against an individual staff member

The Council is committed to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and impartially. If a complaint is received about a staff member, these complaints must be in writing. The appropriate Manager will be notified and will be responsible for the management and resolution of the issue. (Please note: if this type of complaint is not in writing, it will not be actioned).

3.1.5 Complaints against the Chief Executive

Any complaint against the Chief Executive will be referred to the Mayor, who will determine the most appropriate means of investigation and resolution. The procedures and timescales for any such complaint may fall outside the normal standard, and should this be the case, this would be formally advised to the complainant. (Please note: if this type of complaint is not in writing, it will not be actioned).

3.1.6 Complaints against Elected Members

Elected Members must comply with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. This Code describes the high standards of conduct required from Councillors in carrying out their duties. Complaints regarding the conduct of a Councillor should be referred to the Mayor, who will manage such complaints in conjunction with the Chief Executive, in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Code of Conduct.

3.1.7 Anonymous complaints

Complaints made anonymously will be given consideration and dealt with as appropriate depending on the information given. This includes any issues that may be laid anonymously under the "whistle-blower" legislation.

Where no contact details are provided, no response on the outcome of the investigation will be provided.

3.1.8 Unacceptable actions by complainants

Customers may behave out of character in times of distress. There may be circumstances leading up to a complaint. The Council does not accept that forceful or determined behaviour is appropriate behaviour towards Council staff. The Council will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards staff, verbal or otherwise.

A complainant's behaviour may be deemed to be unacceptable if, for example:

- They are abusive to Council staff
- They persistently make the same complaint, despite it having been fully investigated under the Compliments, Complaints and Request for Service Policy, or persist in seeking an unrealistic outcome
- They repeatedly change aspects of the complaint or the desired outcome part way through an investigation.

Where staff handling a complaint consider that the complainant's behaviour is unacceptable, they should advise the complainant of this fact and their reasons for that evaluation, and that the investigation process will be suspended. The investigation will recommence on receipt of an undertaking from the complainant that they will suitably modify their behaviour.

Should a complainant disagree with the suspension, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to either a Team Manager or the Chief Executive.

An "Investigating Officer" may refuse to investigate a complaint if he/she considers that the complaint is frivolous, habitual or vexatious. If the Investigating Officer is considering refusing to investigate on these grounds, they must consult with the appropriate Team Manager before making this decision. If the decision is that the complaint will not be investigated on any of these grounds, the "Investigating Officer" must confirm this to the complainant in writing. If the complainant disagrees with this decision, they retain their right to escalate their complaint to the Chief Executive.