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## Service Level Complaints Handling

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<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Governance
<b>Person Responsible:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Date of Approval:</b>	15 April 2009
<b>Amended:</b>	17 June 2020; 17 July 2022; 19 October 2022
<b>Integrated Framework Reference:</b>	Strategic Community Plan
<b>Strategic Framework Reference:</b>	Corporate Business Plan
<b>Applies to:</b>	All Staff and Council

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### Objective

- (a) To develop a structured and systematic approach to dealing with complaints received by the Shire of Chittering from external persons.
- (b) To assure the community that complaints may be made without fear of recrimination and that all complaints will be promptly dealt with and a (written if required) response will be given setting out the answer to the complaint providing reasons, where appropriate.

### Policy

- 1. The Shire of Chittering is committed to operating in a transparent manner and responding to dissatisfaction from customers relating to the services provided, customer service received and general operation of the Shire.
- 2. In the event that a complaint or report of dissatisfaction is received the Shire of Chittering will endeavour to provide a response within a reasonable timeframe.
- 3. If a complaint is received - and it will potentially be brought to the attention of council, by an outside party - officers will endeavour to make Councillors aware of the issue as soon as practicable.
- 4. The Council recognises that good complaints handling is an integral part of customer service and provides an effective way of reviewing performance and monitoring standards.

### Guidelines

- 1. A complaint, by definition, is an 'expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required'.

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2. Every attempt should be made to immediately resolve complaints presented at the counter or by telephone by the attending officer or referred to the appropriate officer.
  3. Council staff will advise the customer of their rights and obligations and the correct method for their type of complaint.
  4. If a formal complaint is lodged, the shire will determine complaints as quickly as possible and will keep the complainant (and if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint) advised of the progress, details of the resolution and reasons.
  5. At a minimum, the following information is to be supplied – preferably on the appropriate form - in order to effectively process the complaint:
    - Name and address.
    - Contact details.
    - Complaint details.
    - Date/s of occurrence of complaint.
  6. The relevant officers will investigate and may determine to take the following courses of action:-
    - Take no further action and give the complainant reason/s;
    - Resolve the complaint by use of other appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, mediation, informal discussion or negotiation;
    - Discontinue the assessment in circumstances where it becomes evident that the matter would be referred to another body or person and advise the complainant accordingly.
  7. Should the complainant not be satisfied with the result, written application to Council is required within 30 days.
  8. External review options are available, the CEO will advise Complainants of the available options.
  9. Customer correspondence, telephone conversations or interviews which proceed in an inflammatory manner will not be acted on. Where this occurs, the shire has the right to terminate conversations or interviews after warning the customer of that intention.
  10. The written complaint is to be recorded in the Shire's Electronic Record System (eg Synergy).
  11. The written complaint is also to be registered in the Complaint Register.
  12. **ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

An anonymous customer complaint will only be investigated where reasonable and sufficient information is provided and which, in the opinion of a shire employee, constitutes:

    - (a) A breach of statutory provisions;
    - (b) A breach of an approval, licence or permit;

- (c) A matter for which the shire is obligated to act, prescribed in the Local Government Act 1995, Corruption Crime & Misconduct Act 2003 or under any other written law (i.e. the Public Interest Disclosure (PID) legislation);
  - (d) A matter which if not attended to could reasonably constitute a risk to the public health and safety of persons, animals or the environment; and
  - (e) A matter which is deemed to be capable of investigation and resolution without assistance from the complainant.
13. The following will not be registered as complaints due to the fact that each of the below is covered under a separate process or policy:
- a. A request for council services;
  - b. A request for documents, information or explanation of policies or procedures;
  - c. A request for the council to exercise a regulatory function;
  - d. The lodging of an appeal or objection in accordance with a statutory process, standard procedure or policy;
  - e. A submission relating to the exercise of a regulatory function; and
  - f. A petition.
14. This policy does not apply to Elected Members and/or staff in regards to minor and/or serious breaches. Complaints regarding Elected Members are covered by "Code of Conduct – Council Members" Policy.

## References:

<https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Binder-Complaint-Handling.pdf>

<https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Investigation-of-Complaints.pdf>

[External Complaint Form](#)

Code of Conduct – Council Members Policy



