

Objectives: Progressive

Outcome: 4.1 - A resilient, efficient and effective organisation.

Strategy: 4.1.2 - Maximise the Shire's brand and reputation in the community.

Purpose

This policy is to assist the Council in monitoring achievement of its expectations through a validated feedback methodology to ensure the highest standards of customer service and achieving efficient and effective delivery of services to the community.

Background

The Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale strives to deliver standards of customer service at the highest level and this is reflected in our Strategic Community Plan and our Organisational Values. This policy details how Council delivers on the commitment to customer service and how we measure our performance. This policy and the Customer Service Charter form the Customer Service Framework.

Council's commitment to Customer Service includes an effective complaint handling system. It is recognised that this is one method of measuring customer and client satisfaction to provide a useful source of information and feedback for continual improvement of our service.

Objective

The main objectives of this policy are to:

- ensure we deliver the service as outlined in the Shire's Customer Service Charter and to outline customer rights and responsibilities;
- provide customers with a choice as to how they provide feedback to Council about service provision;
- provide a structure around responding to, recording, reporting and using feedback to improve service to customers; and
- outline customer rights and responsibilities.

Council's Customer Service Framework includes an effective complaint handling system which aims to benefit both our customers and Council in a number of ways including:

- responding to feedback/complaints equitably, objectively and in an unbiased manner, ensuring there is no loss of service to the customer;
- creating a second chance to provide service and satisfaction to dissatisfied customers;
- identifying areas of service delivery that need improving;
- providing an opportunity to strengthen relationships between the community and Council; and
- assist in the planning of and allocation of resources.



Definitions

“customer” means a purchaser or user of products or services of Council. This may include external customer such as ratepayers, residents, organisations, constituents, stake holders, businesses, government agencies, contractors, consultants and internal customers, Councillors and other staff members.

“feedback” means positive or negative information about a customer’s reactions to a product, or a person's performance of a task which is used as a basis for continuous improvement and positive reinforcement.

Policy

Commitment to Customer Service

The Shire is committed to delivering a quality customer service that is consistent equitable for all customers. We understand that customers have an expectation that they receive the best possible service that can be practically achieved. Our service is reflective of our organisational values.

We aim to deliver service in a friendly, knowledgeable and professional manner by:

- Being respectful, courteous and impartial in all dealings;
- Identifying ourselves when we talk to customers;
- Listening carefully to customers;
- Ensuring that personal information is kept confidential at all times; and
- Having trained and professional staff who will uphold the Shire’s Values and Code of Conduct.

Customer Service Responsibility

- All Shire Councillors, staff, contractors and volunteers are responsible for the provision of quality customer service to the Community of Shire. They should perform their duties in a professional and responsible manner and treat members of the public fairly, respectfully and consistently, in a non-discriminatory manner and with proper regard for rights and obligations.
- Each staff member is accountable for the quality of customer service delivered through their own work or the quality of output of any project or business unit of which they are a member.
- Directors, Managers and Coordinators are responsible for developing a customer focused work ethic in their teams and empowering staff to undertake customer focused decision making for the better of the communities interest.
- Directors, Managers and Coordinators are responsible for working in consultation with their teams to develop and implement customer focused systems and processes that respond to and satisfy internal and external customer needs and expectations.
- Staff will be provided with the appropriate tools, information and training to provide quality customer service.



Customer Service Charter

The Shire's Customer Service Charter reflects our commitment to providing quality service and outlines what you can expect from us. We strive to provide a friendly, professional and efficient service which meets the needs of our customers. This charter is designed to ensure that standards are upheld.

Our Values

- We focus on the customer – Delivering high service, whilst respecting each other and our customers.
- We act Safely – We put safety first, take responsibility for safety of ourselves and our colleagues, we care about each other and our environment.
- We do the right thing – Act with integrity, create a sustainable environment, we do what we say and say what we do.
- We work as a team – Working together and help each other, our impact on others, and take time to celebrate success.
- Council staff, Councillors, volunteers and contractors will strive to meet the best standards that can be practically achieved, defined in the Customer Service Charter in a professional, responsive and ethical manner. Information provided to customers should be provided promptly and in a format that is easy for the recipient to understand. Information provided should be clear, accurate, current and complete.
- The Customer Service Charter will be published and communicated to ensure that Shire customers are aware of the standards they can expect from the representatives of Council and that are expected of them.

We will:

- Provide prompt, friendly, courteous and professional customer service.
- Understand customer needs, and find better ways of customer service delivery.
- Clearly identify responsible officers.
- Provide the best contact details for an alternative if we cannot help for any reason.
- Encourage feedback to improve our service.
- Respect your privacy, discussing personal business matters privately.

We ask our customers to:

- Treat our employees with the same courtesy and respect given to you.
- Provide us with accurate, complete information and documentation.
- Advise of address or name change.
- Become involved through community consultation projects.
- Contact the officer nominated on your correspondence quoting the letter reference number.
- Provide us with feedback and comments so that we can monitor and improve the quality and standards of our service.
- Have a notepad and a pen on hand when you call.
- Provide us with a daytime telephone number or email address.
- Recognise we may not have the authority to deal with your request or concern, and may need to refer it to another agency/organisation.



- The Customer Service Charter also defines the standards of response from Council. General enquiries are handled by front line staff and referred to specialist staff for other issues.

In Person

- Promptly greet, and treat you in a polite, professional and attentive manner.
- Ensure all employees providing face to face service wear a name badge for ease of identification.
- Ensure guidance will be provided on the process and expected timelines.
- Ensure enquiries of a technical or specialist nature will be dealt with by a suitably experienced officer, either at the time, or by close of business the next working day.
- Ensure written information will be concise and clear in plain English.
- Ensure external customers are prioritised over incoming telephone calls.

Phone

- Answer the calls during work hours within four rings
- Speak clearly and with a smile on our face.
- Provide a direct contact number for future communications (when necessary).
- Greet you with good morning/afternoon, Shire/department name, and advise name.
- Listen carefully to comments, requests or concerns.
- Ensure a minimal number of transfers, ensuring contact with most appropriate officer, and any delays communicated.
- Make a written record (when required) of key points during a phone call.

Written

This includes letters, faxes, emails and online enquiries.

- Provide acknowledgement of receipt to the customer within 48 hours of the officer receiving the request.
- Ensure written, verbal response within seven days of receipt.

Online Media

Our Website

- Contain reliable up to date information.
- Provide links to other websites to provide the customer with helpful information.
- Enable lodgement of planning and building applications.
- Enable online map viewing, which details planning zones, property details, land use and aerial photographs.
- Enable easy and intuitive searching.
- Enable customers to lodge service requests for repairs, landscaping, graffiti removal, and other concerns.
- Detail how to lodge a complaint or a compliment about the way we performed, or delivered a service.
- Display contact details in an easy to find location.

Social Media



- Enquiries on our social media platforms will be responded to in a timely and professional manner
- Include interesting, engaging, relevant and up-to-date information on our social media platforms, encouraging interaction feedback.

Service requests

A service request is defined as a person's demand for a service or action to be undertaken by the Shire

- Collect refuse bins from 6am on designated collection days weekly and recycling bins from 6am on a fortnightly basis (non-compliant bins will not be collected)
- Deliver, replace and maintain mobile garbage bins within 7-10 working days from date of request.
- Inspect urgently reported dangerous trees within 4 hours of them being reported. Required works will be prioritised in line with operational demands and the work addressed directly or scheduled. The initiator of the action request is to be advised of actions taken, and works scheduled to deal with the problem within 24 hours of the complaint being received.
- Inspect street trees where pruning has been requested and provide a response indicating the Shire's position and any planned works to the indicator within 10 working days.
- Assess reported obscene or offensive graffiti to Council-owned property within 4 hours and remove any such graffiti within 2 working days of it being reported to the Shire.
- Assess and respond to routine service requests or complaints, provide a response indicating the Shire's position and any planned works within 10 working days of receipt.
- Provide at least 24 hours warning notice to impacted residents of repair works. This excludes emergency situations.

Development Application

- Register planning applications, including mail applications (in the event they contain all the required information)
- Advise applications by letter or email within 7 working days of registration, the name of the Shire officer responsible for the application.
- Process planning applications for developments of a minor nature or impact within 60 calendar days (where all information has been provided).
- Process other planning applications within 90 days (where all information has been provided).
- Advise applicants at least 3 working days prior to their application being considered at a Council meeting.
- Advise persons who made a written submission about a development at least 3 working days prior to the application being considered at a Council meeting.
- Advise applicants at least 5 working days prior to their application being considered at a Development Assessment Panel Meeting (DAP)

Building Applications

For building applications with all the required information, process will complete within 10 working days for certified, and within 25 for uncertified.

In all cases we will

- Provide reference numbers, name of responsible officer and contact details.



- Deliver a concise, easy to understand, and complete response.
- Provide the customer with a reference number to quote when following up their communication.
- Address issues in a friendly, informative and fair manner.

Where correspondence relates to a complex or technical matter:

- Respond within 14 days, and when further investigation required, we will let you know, provide a completion date and stick to it.
- Provide the name of the responsible person and their contact details.
- Correspondence associated with a statutory process will be resolved in accordance with legislative requirement and timeframes.

Customer Records Management (CRM) system and HPRM.

The Council CRM and HPRM systems and process will provide a system of receiving, recording, investigating, resolving, reviewing and storing service requests made by customers.

Regulatory Framework

Council is committed to providing a fair and equitable service and this Policy has been developed particularly in accordance with the following legislation, regulations, policies and standards:

- Local Government Act 1995
- State Records Act 2000
- Freedom of Information Act 1992
- Code of Conduct

Statement of Procedures

In order to meet the Customer Service commitment, Council will ensure that all staff have access to a range of training and materials to support their Service Delivery.

We acknowledge the diversity of our communities and understand that all members of the public have individual rights and needs and we will act with proper regard and sensitivity. We aim to offer quality service by recognising this diversity and ensuring individual needs are met. We will provide clear and logical means for customers to access services, facilities and information including assistance where necessary to lodge requests or provide feedback.

The Shire recognises that our customers may wish to contact Council in a variety of ways and we are committed to providing choice about how customers can access Council Services. Customers can contact the Shire in a variety of ways:

Via the Council Website – lodging a request online:

- by Telephone;
- by Email;
- Facsimile;
- In our Customer Service Centre;
- by Mail; and



- In our Libraries and Community Centres

Commitment to Service

Council is committed to better understanding the needs and expectations of the local community. Council will enhance its understanding of the needs and expectations of the local community by:

- Carrying out periodic community surveys to learn about what the local community thinks about the areas where Council is performing well and the areas where Council needs to improve service;
- Maintaining opportunities for feedback by encouraging the public to complete feedback forms that Council will record and analyse;
- Maintaining a complaint handling system to respond to service failures and unsatisfied expectations and to enable Council to identify and rectify service failures;
- Establishing guarantees of service in a number of areas and regularly measure the performance of Council against these guarantees;
- Continuing to deliver information on the activities of Council through a variety of means including publishing regular community updates, publishing community information in local newspapers and on the Council website, placing on exhibition at Council offices and libraries plans and other documents relating to Council activities and, using public meetings and other open forms of consultation and dialogue where appropriate; and
- Continuing to encourage input from the community on Council's activities through a variety of means including encouraging the local community to attend and speak at Council meetings, encouraging the local community to contact Councillors to discuss concerns, publicising Council's complaint handling and feedback systems and encouraging submissions on plans and other documents relating to Council activities.

Standards

The importance of measuring how well we deliver customer service is recognised. Council has established a feedback handling process to ensure that customers are able to provide feedback and to enable improvement in Service Delivery. We will also measure how well we deliver our customer service through measurement against a number of standards.

* Resolution is defined as providing the customer with all relevant information and/or outline of action required and timeframe for completion and/or completed all action required.

Our performance is measured against the key performance indicators and reported in the Quarterly Management Report and the Annual Report.

Records of Customer Service Requests

Council has an obligation to properly record and consider all Customer reports and complaints.

The Customer Request Management System (CRM) is utilised to enable the logging, allocating, tracking and reporting of all Customer Service Requests. The CRM is integrated with all relevant organisational mandated systems utilised to measure Council's performance in the completion of service requests.



Council is committed to:

- Ensuring whole of Council utilisation of the CRM.
- Delivering control and tracking mechanisms to ensure service standards are being met.
- The regular review of the CRM.
- Upgrading the CRM when necessary and appropriate.
- Provision of training and education to support cross organisational use.

It is recognised that at times, anonymous complaints/service requests may be made. For many service requests contact names, addresses or phone numbers are required to confirm information or if necessary to obtain additional information. Council may therefore determine not to accept or investigate anonymous requests for service; however it is dependent on the substance of the information provided, the severity of the situation or the service requested.

In some cases Customers may contact Council with an expectation that specific action will be undertaken by Council. In these circumstances Customer Service staff may record the complaint and provide information to the customer if it is clear the complaint is a 'no action' matter. Customer service staff will advise the customer of any means available through other agencies which may assist the customer to resolve the matter.

Customer Feedback

Quality customer service consists of providing an efficient, fair, impartial and responsive service. It is also about delivering the most appropriate and complete service at the outset. However, things can and do go wrong and can only be put right and a quality service delivered where Council becomes aware of the issue.

Council's feedback handling system provides an opportunity for service recovery. Customer feedback encompasses complaints, compliments and suggestions. Specifically a 'complaint' is an expression of dissatisfaction with Council's policies, procedures, charges, employees, contractors, quality of service or goods sold or provided.

Feedback does not include:

- A request for service(unless it's a second request, where there was no response to the first)
- A request for information or explanation of policies or procedures
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure (ie potholes)
- Reports of hazards (eg fallen trees)
- Disputes concerning neighbours
- The lodging of an appeal or request to review a decision
- Complaints where Council has no jurisdiction

Customer Feedback Review Process

In cases where the customer is dissatisfied with the resolution of Customer Feedback, the customer should advise the Customer Service Manager in writing, the reasons for dissatisfaction within 28 days of the initial verbal or written advice. The Customer Service Manager will liaise with the relevant Senior Manager to investigate the matter. Further resolution processes may be implemented such as



mediation or conciliation. The Customer Service Team will provide a written response to the customer within 28 days.

It is important to note that throughout the feedback handling process, Council expects that the customer will provide all relevant information. Additional reviews will not be undertaken.

Members of the local community who do not believe that Council has fulfilled any of its commitments should complain to Council in the first instance.

If the complaint, and any subsequent review, does not resolve the matter, they can complain to:

- The WA Ombudsman (if the matter concerns maladministration or is related to child abuse);
- The Department of Local Government Sport & Cultural Industries (if the matter concerns a serious breakdown in Council operations, if Council as a whole, is not operating satisfactorily or the matter relates to pecuniary interest matters); or
- The Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) (if the matter concerns corrupt conduct).

Each agency has a separate role in relation to the oversight of the conduct of councils. The WA Ombudsman is responsible for complaints about a broad range of matters generally described as maladministration. The Department of Local Government is responsible for investigating pecuniary interest matters and will intervene if councils are operating in an unsatisfactory manner or if Council operations have seriously broken down. The CCC is responsible for investigating corrupt conduct. Councils should be able to explain to the public, on request, these different roles.

Respecting our community

At times some members of the public may act inappropriately toward Council staff or may make onerous demands on Council resources. Staff Guidelines have been developed to enable staff to deal effectively with customers in such situations.

Guidance Notes

Councils Customer Service Charter is the overarching Statement of Commitment to the delivery of service to our community. Council delivers a range of services for which more specific service charters may be adopted. This is reflective of the varying Customer Service delivery models dependant on the type of service provided. All Service delivery charters comply with the overarching charter. This policy is applicable to the following persons:

- All Council employees, including all contractors and volunteers
- Customers defined as any person or organisation that engages with Council, or seeks product, service or information offered by Council

A Customer Service Request is defined as a request for action to be taken in relation to a service or product of Council.

**References**

Name of Policy	3.3.1 Customer Service
Previous Policy	New Policy
Date of Adoption and Resolution Number	Adopted OCM179/12/17 18/12/2017 Ordinary Council Meeting
Review dates and Resolution Numbers	
Next review date	
Related documents	Acts/Regulations <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> Plans/Strategies Strategic Community Plan 2017 - 2027 Policies Nil References Nil Delegations Nil Work Procedures Nil

Note: changes to references may be made without the need to take the Policy to Council for review.