



**Title:** Customer Service Policy

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**Related legislation:** Government Information (Public Access) Act 2010  
Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998  
Local Government Act 1993  
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998  
Protected Disclosures Act 1994

**Related policies:** Complaints Management  
Records Management  
Code of Conduct  
Grievance Handling Policy

**Related procedures:** Customer Service Standards

**Related forms:** Forms referred to by the policy

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## Customer Service

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we provide a high level of service to our customers by ensuring that is delivered in a professional and timely manner.

### Rationale

Canterbury City Council aims to provide the best possible service to its customers. Council is committed to addressing and resolving enquiries and complaints, improving customer service delivery and increasing community satisfaction.

Effective customer service benefits the organization by providing us with the opportunity to foster an ongoing relationship between council and our community.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure that customer requests are dealt with professionally
- Ensure that we comply with our advertised service standards
- Ensure that there is a fair decision making process

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to Councillors and staff at Canterbury City Council who deal with customers, members of the public, other agencies, service providers, community organizations or other members of staff. The policy applies to all customer requests received throughout the organization.

## 4. Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	An expression of dissatisfaction with Council's level of service, employees, or policies and procedures affecting and individual or group of customers.
<b>Compliment</b>	A statement of satisfaction about services provided by Council
<b>ECM</b>	Electronic Contact Management System (Data Works) used to record details of all customer requests, action taken to resolve requests and records of both incoming and outgoing correspondence including email and fax.
<b>Guidelines</b>	Service standards and work practices for each individual service we provide. Details of time frames are listed and recorded in the action index on the ECM.
<b>Request</b>	A request for the provision of services (including the provision of information), a report about damaged or faulty infrastructure, or a report requiring action by our Compliance Section.
<b>Service Standard</b>	Agreed time frames for the completion of customer requests published in our Customer Service Standards.

## 5. Principles

### 5.1 Customer Service Standards

#### 5.1.1 Our commitment to customer service

The person dealing with the request will provide their name and contact details for any future follow up

- We will be fair, courteous, respectful and professional in our response
- We will provide accurate information and advice about a customer's obligations and entitlements

#### 5.1.2 What we ask of our customers

- To be courteous and respectful to our staff and to respect the rights of other customers
- To be complete and accurate in your dealings with us and work with us to solve your problems
- To provide us with feedback so that we can acknowledge good work or improve our services
- To provide us with name address and telephone number so that requests can be registered. Anonymous complaints will be logged, but we cannot guarantee resolution because we may not have sufficient details for action to be undertaken

### 5.2 Defining a customer request

#### 5.2.1 What is a customer request?

It is a request for a service or information or an explanation of policies, procedures and decisions of Council. It includes

- A request for information regarding Council assets or services
- An expression concerning the general direction or the performance of Council and its elected representatives.
- Reports of hazards and damaged or faulty infrastructure
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, unauthorised building work or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our services

#### 5.2.2 Customer requests which require discretion to resolve

There are times when we receive requests from customers which don't fall within existing service guidelines. This doesn't include requests from customers who are demanding services they are either not entitled to or are expecting within an unreasonable time frame.

These requests are often generated by our more vulnerable residents and need to be treated as exceptions because of extenuating circumstances.

- The Group Manager Customer and Information Services will evaluate these requests and liaise with Managers to ensure the task is allocated and completed within an agreed time frame

- The Group Manager Customer and Information Services will escalate these requests to Directors if the service is required more urgently or not completed within the agreed time frame

## **6. Responsibilities**

### **6.1 General Manager**

The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that the City of Canterbury complies with the requirements and procedures outlined in the Customer Service Policy.

### **6.2 Directors**

Directors are responsible for:

- Encouraging excellence in customer service and rewarding customer service initiatives
- Ensuring that customer requests are finalized in accordance with service standards
- Ensuring that managers and staff in their Divisions are aware of their responsibilities under the customer service policy
- Identifying and either recommending or implementing improvements or changes to improve customer service effectiveness

### **6.3 Group Manager Customer and Information Services**

The Group Manager Customer and Information Services is responsible for:

- Managing the operations in the Customer Service Centre to provide a high level of customer service to our residents
- Ensuring customer service staff are trained to provide information to customers over the counter, by telephone and email.
- Monitoring customer requests to ensure compliance with Customer Service Standards.
- Evaluating customer requests with extenuating circumstances and negotiate outcomes with Managers and Directors
- Monitoring trends in customer service and implement changes for improvement
- Preparing quarterly management reports on customer service centre performance

### **6.4 Managers**

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that customer requests are finalized in accordance with service standards
- Ensuring that staff in their area are aware of their responsibilities under the customer service policy
- Identifying improvements or changes to improve customer service effectiveness

### **6.5 All Staff**

All staff dealing with customer requests are responsible for:

- Responding to customer enquiries promptly and efficiently

- Providing customers with your name when answering an enquiry or making a call to a customer
- Ensuring all details including name, address and telephone number and a brief précis is recorded on the ECM
- Providing clear advice on when the customer can expect a response, if the enquiry cannot be resolved on the spot
- Responding to telephone messages within two business days
- Remaining calm and professional even if the customer is demanding

## **7. Procedures**

### **7.1 Service Standards**

#### **7.1.1 In person**

Our Customer Service Centre is staffed between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday

- We identify ourselves by wearing a name badge
- We greet people on arrival and attend to your enquiry within 5 minutes

#### **7.1.2 Telephone**

In the Call Centre, we try to answer your call within 3 rings

- If you call when demand for our services is high, you may have to wait for a short time
- We identify ourselves by name and Division
- When you are transferred to a staff member, your call will be answered within three rings or you will be given the choice of leaving a voicemail message or being reconnected to our call centre
- If you leave a message for a staff member we undertake to return your call within 2 days

#### **7.1.3 Replies- Letters/Fax/Email**

- Acknowledge receipt within 1 day
- Target response time is subject to agreed response plan within 28 days

### **7.2 Logging Requests**

#### **7.2.1 Logging detail**

It is essential that all requests for service are logged into the ECM, regardless of how they are received. All staff need to log customer name, address, telephone number, action type and a brief description of the request. It is important for these details to be recorded accurately.

### **7.2.2 Action taken**

Staff that are allocated requests need to complete them and add a note to the ECM indicating the action they have taken. If the request is delayed for any reason, notes outlining the reasons for delay should also be recorded.

## **7.3 Confidentiality and Privacy**

We will respect the privacy and confidentiality of information received as much as we can. We cannot, however, completely guarantee confidentiality because we may have statutory obligations or other information disclosure requirements.

## **7.4 Dealing with difficult or demanding customers**

Staff are expected to treat customers with respect and make an effort to address the customer needs even if they are difficult or demanding.

### **7.4.1 Customers who cannot be satisfied**

In a small percentage of cases a customer may indicate that they are not satisfied with a decision or refuse to accept that their issue doesn't fall within our jurisdiction. These cases should be referred to the appropriate Director for consultation with the General Manager.

If the General Manager is of the opinion that we have exhausted all appropriate avenues of internal review or appeal, he may write to the customer, restate our decision. He may advise them that we will no longer accept phone calls, conduct any further interviews or respond to any further correspondence unless the customer provides significant new information relating to their concern or they raise new issues which merits new action.

### **7.4.2 Customers who make unreasonable demands**

Customers who make unreasonable demands include those who divert Council's resources away from other functions because of the amount of information requested or the number of approaches for assistance or services they make. These cases should be referred to the appropriate Director for consultation with the General Manager.

The General Manager may write to the customer outlining our concerns and requesting that they limit their requests and if they continue, we may not respond to any future correspondence or only respond to a limited number of requests within a given period.

### **7.4.3 Customers who are abusive or aggressive**

Customers who either verbally abusive or threaten physical violence should be warned by the staff member dealing with them that if they don't desist that the call or interview will be terminated. Staff members who witness someone being abusive to a colleague should ensure that they call a supervisor or manager to provide backup. If the customer ignores the warning the conversation will be terminated and their Manager may call the police for assistance.

Any abusive or aggressive behavior will be reported to the appropriate Director for consultation with the General Manager and the incident will be recorded in the ECM.

#### **7.4.4 Vexatious Customers**

If a person continues to make representations that have no basis in fact and/or are considered frivolous or mischievous, the General Manager may declare them as a vexatious customer.

The General Manager may write to the customer advising them that they have been declared as a vexatious customer and that we may no longer accept phone calls, conduct further interviews or respond to any further correspondence unless the customer provides significant new information relating to their concerns.

#### **7.4.5 Records of contact with difficult or demanding customers**

In all of these instances, it is essential for staff to keep a record of all conversations or correspondence and to register these into the ECM, so that we have an accurate record of events.