

Customer Service Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a standard approach to managing contact and interaction with customers. This is to ensure that all customers are treated in a consistent, professional and ethical manner and receive courteous and efficient service.

2 Policy

Council strives to deliver high standards of customer service and this is reflected in our Customer Service Framework. This policy details how Council delivers on its commitment to customer service through performance targets and measures.

This policy, in conjunction with the following Council documents, forms Council's Customer Service Framework:

1. Customer Service Charter
2. Customer Service Procedures
3. Complaints and Other Feedback Policy
4. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy

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

We acknowledge the diversity of our communities and understand that members of the public have individual needs and 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.

Council recognises that our customers may wish to contact us in a variety of ways and we are committed to providing choice about how customers can access our services.

2.1 Understanding Customer Need and Expectation

Council is committed to better understanding the needs and expectations of our customers and will enhance this understanding by:

1. Conducting periodic community surveys to gather feedback regarding Council's services
2. Providing opportunities for direct customer feedback after interacting with Council
3. Involving the community in dialogue about providing services and planning for the future
4. Maintaining a complaint handling system to identify, respond to and rectify service failures and unsatisfied expectations
5. Establishing and reporting on Customer Service Key Performance Indicators and targets to measure and monitor customer service performance

2.2 Standards of Service

Council workers will uphold a professional and positive image of Council at all times through:

1. Demonstrating respect, courtesy, patience, attentiveness, consideration and sensitivity to our customers that is appropriate to their age, culture and linguistic background
2. Responding to customer enquiries promptly, efficiently and within allocated timeframes
3. Identification of customer needs and expectations

4. Providing the customer with advice and information that is clear and concise
5. Making decisions using processes that are consultative, impartial and ethical
6. Demonstrating professionalism when dealing with difficult customers
7. Acting in accordance with the law and Council’s policies and procedures

2.2.1 Written Correspondence (letters and emails)

Council workers (with appropriate delegations) will respond to written correspondence (letters and e-mails) from customers within 7 working days of receipt. In situations where required investigation prevents this timeframe being met – a communication to the customer (within this time period) will be made, explaining the situation and providing an indicative timeframe of when an appropriate response will be provided.

2.2.2 Customer Service Centre (in person)

Council workers will serve customers attending our Customer Service Centre as quickly and effectively as possible, through:

1. A wait time of less than 5 minutes
2. Resolving at least 80% of customer requests/enquiries at the first point of contact

2.2.3 Contact Centre (telephone)

For calls made to Council’s main telephone service (6648 4000) during normal business hours, Council workers will:

1. Answer at least 80% of calls within 90 seconds
2. Resolve at least 80% of customer requests/enquiries at the first point of contact

2.2.4 Service Requests (online, telephone and in person)

Service requests received from customers will be logged and allocated a priority level (with an associated response time) using the following table:

Priority Level	Response Time
1 – Extreme	Within 4 hours
2 – High	Within 2 working days
3 – Medium	Within 7 working days
4 – Low	Within 7 working days

Council workers will determine the priority level to be allocated (based on the details of the request received). Council officers will respond to service requests within the priority level allocated. In situations where required investigation prevents this timeframe being met – a communication to the customer (within this time period) will be made, explaining the situation and providing an indicative timeframe of when an appropriate response will be provided.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Council provides opportunities for direct customer feedback through customer surveys which can be accessed in person (at our customer service centre), online (via our corporate website) and after telephone calls (made to the contact centre).

The surveys are used to measure the level of customer satisfaction in regards to:

1. The level of ‘customer service’ received; and
2. The ‘outcome’ of the interaction with Council

Council has a target of achieving a level of ‘Satisfied’ or higher at least 90% of the time in regards to the level of ‘customer service’ received and a target of achieving a level of ‘Satisfied’ or higher at least 70% of the time in regards to the ‘outcome’ of the interaction with Council.

2.4 Call Recording

Calls received at Council's main Contact Centre are recorded for quality and training purposes.

Customers are informed at the commencement of their call that the call will be recorded. Customers can request to not have their call recorded by informing the Council Officer answering their call – at which time the recording function can be disabled by the Council Officer for that particular call.

Call recordings will only be used for:

1. Staff Training – to ensure an effective and consistent approach to customer requests.
2. Quality Assurance – to ensure customer requests are logged and actioned as requested by the customer.

2.5 Dealing with Difficult Customers

Council workers will treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times and to make every reasonable effort to address the customer's request/enquiry even when this proves difficult due to the customers' response.

2.6 Customers who are Rude, Abusive or Aggressive

Rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property or physical violence against a person.

If, in the opinion of any council worker, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made by a customer, the worker will:

1. Inform the customer if the behaviour continues the communication/interaction with them will be terminated;
2. Terminate the communication/interaction if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.

Where a communication/interaction has been terminated with a customer the council worker must notify their relevant supervisor of the details as soon as possible.

3 Definitions

Customers: Individuals and organisations to which Council provides service. Customers include ratepayers, residents, asset users, consultants, developers, government departments and visitors to the Coffs Harbour local government area. Internal customers include other Council departments and council workers.

Customer Service: Interactions between a customer and a provider at the time of a sale or provision of a service and thereafter. Customer service adds value to a product or service and builds an enduring relationship.

Council Worker: A worker is defined as being one of the following:

- an employee, or
- a contractor or subcontractor, or
- an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, or
- an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking, or
- an outworker, or
- an apprentice or trainee, or
- a student gaining work experience, or
- a volunteer

4 Key Responsibilities

Position	Directorate	Responsibility
Mayor	Council	To lead councillors in their understanding of, and compliance.
General Manager	Executive	To lead workers (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and related Procedures.
Directors and Council Leaders	All Directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy and related Procedures.
All Council workers	Council	To be aware of and ensure compliance with this policy.
Council Committees		To be aware and adhere to this policy.

5 References

- Council's Complaints and Other Feedback Policy
- Council's Customer Service Charter
- Council's Customer Service Procedures
- Council's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy
- Government Information (Public Access) Act
- Local Government Act
- NSW Ombudsman Better Service and Communication – Guidelines for Local Government
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act

6 Details of Approval and revision

- **Approval date:** 9/06/2022
- **Responsible Group:** Customer Services Group
- **Responsible Section:** N/A
- **Superseded policies/procedures:**
- **Next review date:** 28/08/2025

Table of amendments

Amendment	Authoriser	Approval ref	Date
<p>The following was amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 2.1 (point 5) – the following wording added 'and reporting on' • Section 2.2.3 (first point) - 30 seconds changed to 90 seconds in regards to call answer time • Section 2.3 – removal of survey rating table and associated wording as this detail will be contained within the associated procedure • Minor formatting 	Council	2022/125	09/06/2022