Council Policy

Policy Title:	Complaints Policy
Responsibility:	Chief Executive
First Adopted:	July 2008
Review Frequency:	Three yearly, or as required
Last Reviewed:	18 September 2015
Next Review Due:	18 September 2018
Doc No	613761 File No S66-0001

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1 Policy Objectives

1.1 The objective of this policy is to give assurance and guidance to both staff and public as to how complaints are to be dealt with.

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2 Definitions

2.1 Allegation
An allegation is an informal suggestion or report of complaint. It may be made by the person directly affected or by another person. The person gives no indication that they want their concern followed up.

2.2 Complaint
A complaint is the verbal or written report to a council officer by a member of the public of an incident that has directly affected them during their dealings with Council. The report is made with the desire that the concern be satisfactorily resolved. A complaint received with no contact details to allow verification will be treated as an allegation until the person identifies themselves.

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3 Principles

3.1 Council is a service provider in the public eye. As such it is appropriate that the public expects excellent customer service and efficient and accurate processing of their requests. That expectation exists regardless of internal or external factors that may affect staff, resourcing levels or workloads. Council accepts that reality. From time to time our different functions also lead us into conflict with the views of our customers or the outcomes they desire. There are many factors which may lead to a customer complaint. Regardless of the circumstances, it is important that the complaints process:
(a) Respects the integrity of complaints, the reputation of affected staff and the service they manage.
(b) Ensures integrity and transparency of Council processes.
(c) Ensures effective communication with complainants.
(d) Protects the reputation of Council.

4 Background

4.1 This Policy arose from the need to clarify for Council staff how a complaint is to be dealt with for consistency and transparency.

5 Policy Statement

5.1 Types of Complaint
There are two main types of complaints; against processes and against officers. Often what may appear to be a personal complaint against an officer may in reality be a complaint against a process that has frustrated the customer but has been legitimately executed by an officer. A personal complaint is a verified complaint against the manner in which the officer conducted themselves in the execution of their role.

5.2 Seriousness of complaints
Most complaints are minor in nature and can be dealt with by Customer Services Officers or referred by them to the appropriate council officer for resolution. If the complainant wishes the concern to be taken more seriously they must lodge a formal complaint in writing for investigation.

5.3 Confidentiality
Those involved in the complaint (including the receiver of the complaint) are not to disclose details of the matter to others who are not involved. The receiver of the complaint is encouraged to advise the complainant of this policy and procedure for dealing with the matter, but no opinions or solutions are to be offered to them.

5.4 Process for Allegations
Allegations will be treated as hearsay until such time as the person concerned makes an informal or formal complaint.

5.5 Process for Formal Complaints
Please see attached schedule for details of the complaints process.

Relevant Delegations

6.1 As per the Policy. The delegation to change this Policy is with the Chief Executive alone.

Annotations

Date	Description
July 2008	Adopted by Strategy Team
September 2015	Policy Reviewed and updated. Report doc: 614180

Schedule 1: Process for dealing with a formal complaint

Most complaints are minor in nature and can be dealt with by Customer Services Officers or referred by them to the appropriate council officer for resolution. If the complainant wishes the concern to be taken more seriously they must lodge a formal complaint in writing for investigation.

Complaint received in writing

Complaint passed to Group Manager

GM reviews substance and seriousness of complaint: does it relate to a **PROCESS** or a **PERSON?**

Complaint acknowledged within 3 working days

Complaint about a COUNCIL PROCESS

GM undertakes a desktop review of process

No problem found

Problem found

Letter of apology for inconvenience sent to the complainant

Formal review of PROCESS with relevant council officers

PROCESS improved

Letter informing complainant of outcome

Complaint about a COUNCIL EMPLOYEE

GM holds meeting with EMPLOYEE against whom complaint is lodged to seek their perspective

GM collates all information and decides on best course of action for resolution of complaint

Contact made with complainant advising them of investigation process and offering a resolution

If the complaint has highlighted a professional or personal concern with the EMPLOYEE, this matter is then dealt with through the performance review or disciplinary process