

Complaint Handling Policy

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Policy owner	Director, Community, Culture and Customer Experience
Approved by	Council
Date approved	September 2022
Commencement date	September 2022
TRIM Reference	A04/1193
Next revision date	September 2025
Relevant strategic direction	Build the community's confidence in the integrity and capability of Waverley Council Build an organisation that places customers and the community at the heart of service delivery
Relevant legislation/codes	NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2015)
Related policies/procedures/guidelines	Complaint Handling Procedure Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure

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1. Background

Council delivers a diverse range of services to the community, which includes residents, ratepayers, visitors, community and government agencies, and businesses.

Council welcomes all feedback from the community and is committed to managing complaints in a timely, respectful and appropriate manner.

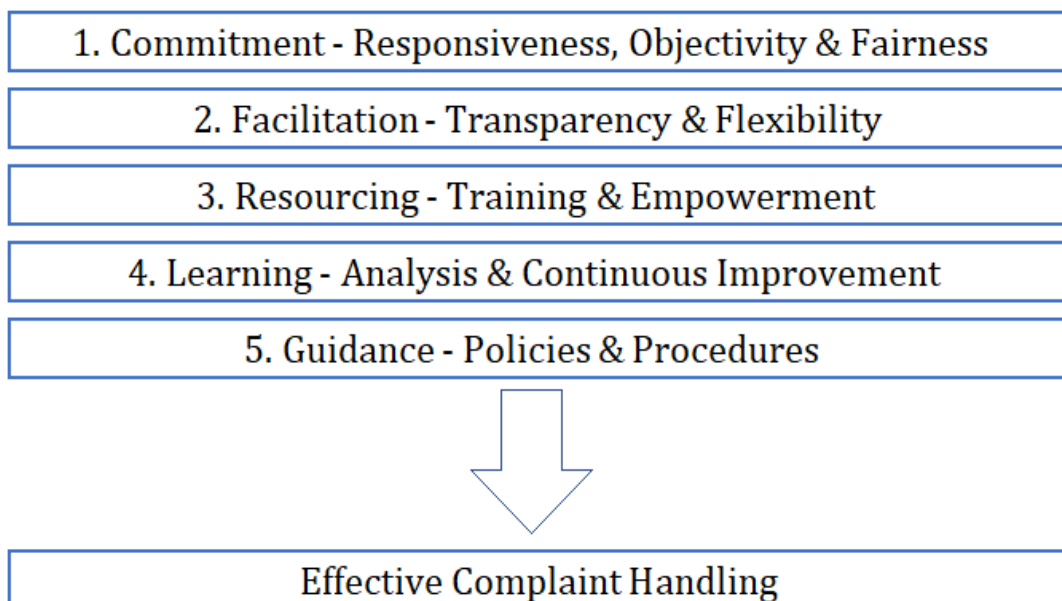
Feedback from our community provides Council with valuable insights into areas where service standards are not meeting expectations and provides an opportunity for continuous improvement to operations, service delivery and systems.

This policy was developed in accordance with the NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2015) and supports the objectives in the Waverley Community Strategic Plan 2022-32.

2. Purpose

The policy aims to:

- 2.1 provide clear direction and guidance to staff to respond fairly, efficiently and effectively to complaints from the community.
- 2.2 enhance public confidence by enabling our community to lodge complaints with the assurance that they will be dealt with fairly and promptly.
- 2.3 provide a transparent, accessible and effective method of capturing complaints so they can be analysed and reported on in order to deliver quality improvements to operations, service delivery and the customer experience.
- 2.4 assist staff to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to handling and resolving complaints from the public.
- 2.5 address the essential components of an effective complaint management system as outlined in the NSW Ombudsman's *Complaint Management Framework (2015)* as follows -



3. Scope

This policy covers all employees of Council, any person or organisation contracted to or acting on behalf of Council and any person or organisation employed to work on Council premises or facilities.

This policy defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with a Council policy or procedure, with the quality and/or timeliness of service provided, or with the behaviour of a Council officer. It should be read in conjunction with Council's Complaint Handling Procedure and Council's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure. The policy, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used in the handling of complaints makes up an effective complaints management system.

This policy does not cover the following complaints:

- Code of Conduct complaints
- Public interest disclosures
- Other serious complaints

These are managed by the General Manager, Complaints Coordinator/public officer (Executive Manager, Governance) and Executive Manager, Human Resources, Safety and Wellbeing, in accordance with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines.

This policy also does not cover complaints received by Councillors from the public.

4. Policy Content

Waverley Council is committed to providing high quality customer service and recognises that feedback provides valuable insights into areas where service standards are not meeting expectations. The aim of capturing and reporting on complaints is to ensure that Council is handling complaints in a timely manner as well as recognising trends and acting on opportunities for continuous improvement to operations, service delivery and the customer experience.

4.1 Deliver outcomes that align with the Waverley Community Strategic Plan

Waverley 2032 identifies the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future. One of the goals is to build the community's confidence in the integrity and capability of Waverley Council. Dealing with complaints in a fair, transparent and timely manner will enhance public confidence in Council's abilities to provide an effective service to the community.

4.2 Responsiveness and Transparency

All complaints received about Council policies and procedures, service quality and behaviour of staff that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact will be logged in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, whether received by phone, email, letter or in person. This will maximise the effectiveness of Council's time and resources and ensure that all complaints are investigated and responded to. Refer to Council's Complaint Handling Procedure for methods of capturing complaints in the CRM.

Council is committed to resolving complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible and in a timely manner. The length of time taken to deal with complaints will depend on the circumstances, the complexity of the issues raised and the time taken to properly investigate. However, all complaints

will be acknowledged in writing with a reference number, this includes the automated email notification from the CRM, and aim to be resolved within the service level agreement of 20 business days. Where additional time is required the customer will be notified in writing.

When responding to complaints, staff will act in accordance with Council's Complaint Handling Procedure as well as relevant legislation and/or regulations and any other internal documents that provide guidance on the resolution of complaints.

4.3 Anonymous Complaints

Council will endeavour to review anonymous complaints, however without the ability to clarify information and thoroughly investigate, the resolution may be limited. Council will act on anonymous complaints where there is a clear and obvious risk to safety and there is sufficient information to warrant action or investigation.

4.4 Unreasonable Complaints

Unreasonable complaints will be managed in accordance with the NSW Ombudsman's *Complaint Management Framework 2015* as outlined in Council's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure.

4.5 Reporting and Analysis

Complaints logged in the CRM provide a record about the receipt, handling and outcomes of complaints. Data from complaints will be analysed to monitor trends and to identify recurring and systemic issues in order to guide business improvements and develop proactive strategies to prevent problem issues from occurring.

The analysis of complaints will include –

- the number of complaints received and trends in complaint numbers over time
- types of issues raised in complaints
- the outcome of complaints
- internal or external factors that could have impacted the volume of complaints

Executive Managers will receive monthly updates on complaints for their area and are responsible for ensuring they have been dealt with consistently, properly recorded on Council's CRM and closed within the set timeframe with sufficient reason and appropriate communication with the complainant.

Complaints will not be upheld if the investigation reveals that they lack substance and/or are unsupported by evidence or specific incidents. The Manager, Customer Service will assess if complaints are upheld based on the agreed definitions as follows -

1. *Policy and Procedure*
 - a. Customer has received the service or goods that were requested or paid for in line with documented policy or procedures
 - b. Customer is unhappy with policy for personal reasons that do not benefit the greater community
 - c. There is no specific incident to warrant the complaint, or it is based on incorrect information or assumptions

2. *Quality of Service*
 - a. Council is not the authority that completed the work or provided the service
 - b. Council has performed the service according to documented policy or procedures
 - c. There is no specific incident to warrant the complaint, or it is based on incorrect information or assumptions
3. *Behaviour of Staff*
 - a. Council staff were found to have conducted themselves according to their training and/or expectations of their role
 - b. There is sufficient reason to believe that the customer acted inappropriately or made unreasonable requests
 - c. Customer did not witness the behaviour themselves

4.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
<i>Director, Community, Culture and Customer Experience</i>	Responsible for overseeing implementation and review of this policy
<i>Executive Manager, Customer Experience and Communications</i>	
<i>General Manager, Directors and Executive Managers</i>	Responsible for ensuring that staff comply with this policy and make use of the tools and training provided to guide implementation
<i>Director, Corporate Services</i>	Investigate complaints made about corrupt conduct, maladministration, serious and substantial waste of public money, government information contravention or local government pecuniary interest contravention by Council employees and Councillors, in accordance with the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994</i> and according to Council's <i>Internal Reporting Policy</i> .
<i>Executive Manager, Governance</i>	
	Responsible for providing assistance to staff in implementing this policy
<i>Manager, Customer Service</i>	Responsible for reporting and identifying trends and providing support to managers to resolve complaints within the service level
	Responsible for maintaining and developing tools and procedures for managing complaints in support of the policy
<i>Council staff</i>	Responsible for adhering to this policy and making use of the tools in place to guide implementation

5. Confidentiality and Access to Council Information

Council will protect the identity of complainants where this is practical and appropriate. Contact details will only be used by Council to confirm information and/or to provide an outcome.

Members of the public have the right to access certain information held by Council as identified in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. Council is also required to allow members of the public to access other information unless satisfied that allowing access would be contrary to public interest or breach other statutory obligations.

6. Review of Policy

6.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Complainant</i>	A member of the community who has lodged a complaint with Council
<i>Complaint</i>	An expression of dissatisfaction made to Council about - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Council policy or procedure - the quality of service provided by Council - the behaviour of a Council officer
<i>Complaint Management System</i>	Policies, procedures, guidelines, practices, staff, hardware and software used in the management of complaints
<i>Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System</i>	Software used to manage customer requests by capturing contact information and details of the complaint, issue or request and by assigning actions for investigation and response to relevant staff via an internal workflow
<i>NSW Ombudsman</i>	Independent agency that monitors the public sector to ensure that these agencies and staff are meeting their responsibilities to the community
<i>Public Interest Disclosure</i>	A complaint made about corrupt conduct, maladministration, serious and substantial waste of public money, government information contravention or local government pecuniary interest contravention by Council employees and Councillors, as dealt with under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 and according to Council's Internal Reporting Policy.
<i>Service Request (not Complaint)</i>	A request made to Council for - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information on Council services, events and policies - a service (for example, to repair infrastructure or to remove dumped rubbish) - an investigation into a compliance/regulatory issue such as neighbour noise or unauthorised building work

*Unreasonable
Complainant*

Individuals or groups who behave in ways that are inappropriate and unacceptable, despite Council's best efforts to assist them

Individuals or groups who continue to request action from Council about a matter that has been reasonably resolved

Individuals or groups who engage in conduct defined as unreasonable in the NSW Ombudsman's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Manual (2012).
