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1. PREAMBLE

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy is primarily focused on establishing a commitment in accepting and resolving complaints within the organisation and a culture which encourages and values feedback from our community.

1.1 Background

The City of Holdfast Bay (Council) is committed to providing excellence in customer service. As part of this commitment, Council seeks to know what its customers require, understand how it can improve its services to meet the needs of its community and to respond positively to concerns and criticisms.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for Council’s customers if they are dissatisfied with a Council action, decision or service. This Policy provides guidelines as to how the Council will respond to requests for a service, a complaint or compliment of the Council or its representatives.

1.3 Scope

This Policy applies to services and decisions provided or made by Council, and its representatives. Where Council has failed to meet the normal standards for a service which has been, or should have been provided, this policy and the associated procedures apply.

This Policy will not be applied where the complaint is determined to be about matters that are not Council’s responsibility, such as disputes between neighbours.

This policy will not be applied where there are other complaint procedures that apply to the particular type of complaint:

- Complaints against a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer
- Freedom of Information applications
- Insurance claims
- Decisions made under legislation other than the *Local Government Act 1999*, such as the *Development Act 1993* or *Expiation of Offences Act 1996*

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In these instances, Council will provide and explain specific information regarding the most appropriate process.

1.4 Definitions

Council – the City of Holdfast Bay

Council Representative – a person employed directly by the Council (whether that position is permanent or contractual) and persons providing services on behalf of, the Council even though they may be employed by another party, including volunteers and contractors.

Customer – a person or organisation who receives goods or services provided by the City of Holdfast Bay or its representatives.

Request for Service - an application to have Council or its representatives take some form of action to provide a Council service.

Feedback - can take the form of comments both positive and negative, about services provided by Council without necessarily requiring a corrective action, change of service or formal review of a decision. Feedback may, however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods.

Complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by Council or its representatives that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected. This includes complaints about a service that has been, or should have been delivered.

1.5 Strategic Reference

Culture: Providing customer-centred services

Culture: Supporting excellent, efficient operations

Community: Fostering an engaged and contributing community

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. Council will provide excellent customer service. All representatives are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the organisation's corporate values. Achievement- Respect- Innovation- Simplicity- Engagement.
- 2.2. Council will provide all representatives with training (either formal, informal or both) in relation to the provision of excellent customer service.
- 2.3. Customers may make contact with Council in a number of ways including:
 - Face to face
 - City of Holdfast Bay Website
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - Mail

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- 2.4 Council will ensure the following steps are followed when responding to requests for service, complaints or compliments:
- Prompt acknowledgement
 - Assessment
 - Investigation (if warranted)
 - Provide progress updates to the customer (if required)
 - Identify improvements required
 - Clear response to the customer
 - Follow up of any Customer Service concerns
- 2.5 Council expects that complaints, compliments, enquiries and requests for service are responded to promptly at the initial point of contact. Where more complex responses are required, the matter will be considered as quickly as possible by the most appropriate employee and the customer will be kept informed of the steps and processes at all times.
- 2.6 Requests for service provision will take into account reasonable expectations and existing service standards, legislative responsibility, and the efficient and effective availability of Council resources.
- 2.7 The principles of natural justice, - timeliness, opportunities for comment and provision of relevant information, and, where appropriate, confidentiality - will apply to all requests for service, complaints or compliments.
- 2.8 Council and its representatives will treat all customers with respect and expect the same in return from customers.
- 2.9 When a review of a request for service or complaint has been completed and the complaint is found to be justified Council will remedy the situation in a manner which is consistent and fair for both Council and the complainant. The solution chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances.
- 2.10 Council may refuse to investigate the complaint where an initial review of the matters determines the request to be trivial, frivolous or vexatious.
- 2.11 If a review of a request for service or complaint has been completed and the customer is not satisfied with the outcome, the customer may ask for either mediation, neutral evaluation or conciliation in order to reach an agreed outcome.
- The process for mediation, neutral evaluation or conciliation will be in accordance with that described in Section 271 of the Local Government Act 1999.
 - Costs of mediation, neutral evaluation and conciliation will be shared equally by the City of Holdfast Bay and the applicant.
- 2.11 At any time, regardless of the outcome of a review the complainant may contact the Ombudsman for further assistance and/or advice.
- 2.12 Council will ensure that all requests, comments and complaints will be recorded as part of its internal record keeping systems. This information will be regularly

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reviewed with the intention of identifying trends and improving Council's customer service provision, and will be reported in Council's Annual Report.

2.13 Confidentiality

Complaints will be investigated in private, to the extent possible. The identity of complainants and any person who is the subject of a complaint will only be disclosed to those involved in the investigation process. The complaint will not be revealed or made public by the Council, except where required by law. All complaints lodged with Council are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1991 and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed under the provisions of that legislation.

2.14 Review and Evaluation

In order to ensure Council continues to provide the best possible service response for its customers, this policy is subject to periodic evaluation and review.

This policy will be available to download from Council's website: www.holdfast.sa.gov.au and for inspection during normal business hours

3. REFERENCES

3.1 Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1999*

3.2 Other References

City of Holdfast Bay

- Customer Feedback and Complaints Procedure
- TRIM guidelines
- Customer Request System guidelines