



Shire of Denmark

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Service Complaint

(Issues with Shire Service)

This form can be used for an expression of dissatisfaction with the Council's policies, procedures, fees & charges, employees, its contractors or agents or the quality of the services and/or works it provides.

It is important to note that a complaint is not the same as a request for service, a request for information, an inquiry seeking clarification of an issue or seeking a review of a Council or Council Officer's decision or conditions relating to a decision.

Name of Complainant/s: _____

Address in Full: _____

Phone _____

Email: _____

Complaint: _____

[See over page if you require more space]

Preferred Solution: _____

Complainants' Signature: _____

Office Use Only

Complaint Taken By: _____ **Date:** _____

Actioning Officer: _____

Action Taken: _____

Date: _____

P040214 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY



Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To develop a structured systematic approach to dealing with complaints received by the Shire of Denmark from external persons.
2. To assure the community that complaints may be made without fear of recrimination and that all complaints will be promptly dealt with and a (written if required) response will be given setting out the answer to the complaint providing reasons, where appropriate.
3. To have complaints dealt with efficiently by an appropriate employee with minimal referral.
4. To use complaints statistics to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's operations.

Policy

1. The Shire of Denmark recognises the right of its customers to make complaints about services or service delivery, and will make it a priority to address those complaints and rectify unsatisfactory consequences.
2. The Council and its staff will be open and honest in its dealings with customers, and will explain in "plain English" why, for legislative/legal reasons, cost constraints or some other matter beyond its control, it is unable to act in accordance with a complainant's request.
3. The Council recognises that good complaints handling is an integral part of customer service and provides an effective way of reviewing performance and monitoring standards.

Guidelines

1. Any person or their representative can lodge a complaint.
2. Complaints will be accepted in writing, in person, by facsimile transmission, by email or by telephone. If a verbally received complaint alleges a criminal offence, corruption or other serious matter, the receiving officer is to advise the complainant that the matter must be submitted in writing.
3. Complainants are to be advised that anonymous complaints may not be processed as it is possible that they may be mischievous or vexatious. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it will be at the discretion of the receiving officer to act or refer the complaint or not to deal with the complaint.
4. Complaints that are to be dealt with under this policy include, but are not necessarily limited to, expressions of dissatisfaction regarding;
 - a) decisions made by Council or staff;
 - b) inappropriate behaviour of staff or members such as rudeness, discrimination or harassment;
 - c) the standard of works or services provided by Council.
 - d) the standard or condition of a facility provided by Council.
 - e) failure of Council to comply with the Local Government Act, Council policies, Council's local laws and other laws administered by Council.

5. The following issues shall not be regarded as complaints and shall not be dealt with under this policy:
 - a) requests for services;
 - b) requests for information or explanations of policies and/or procedures;
 - c) the lodging of a formal objection or appeal in accordance with the Local Government Act and other Acts or in accordance with Council policies or standard procedures;
 - d) the lodging of a submission in response to an invitation for comment.
6. Complaints regarding elected members are to be directed to the CEO. The CEO is responsible for the initial investigation and administrative responses. Matters that may require disciplinary action are to be referred to the Shire President and dealt with under the Council's Code of Conduct.
7. Complaints from Councillors, the Ombudsman, the Local Government Department or from Members of Parliament shall be referred to, and dealt with by, the CEO unless the complaints relates to the CEO whereupon the complaint will be dealt with by the Shire President.
8. When any complaint is made, other than a complaint referred to in clauses 6 and 7, the designated receiving officer shall, within the limit of their authority, attempt to satisfy the complainant as soon as possible. If a complainant cannot be satisfied immediately, or on the same day, the designated receiving officer shall immediately issue to the complainant a written acknowledgement of the complaint and if need be, refer to the complaint and a copy of the acknowledgement to a senior employee, or the CEO, as is appropriate, for investigation and determination of the complaint.
9. The following standard response times shall, ideally, be adhered to by all staff when dealing with complaints:
 - a) Dealing with complaints lodged verbally in person or over the telephone – immediately, or within one (1) working day or issue an acknowledgement and explanation for any delay.
 - b) Dealing with complaints lodged by letters, facsimile, email, etc – within five (5) working days or issue an acknowledgement and explanation for any delay.

Where a complainant is advised of a likely delay to the handling of the complaint and the complaint is not finalised within a reasonable period of time, the complainant is to be provided with status reports from time to time until the complaint is satisfied.

10. Where a complaint has been investigated and found to be justified, the relevant officer who dealt with the complaint will ensure that the remedy is carried out, will advise the complainant that the Shire does acknowledge substance in the complaint and the specific action that will be taken by the Shire to respond to the circumstances of the complaint. The officer will, if appropriate, make follow-up contact with the complainant to ensure that the complaint has been resolved satisfactorily.
11. Where a complaint may identify the need for a review of procedures to prevent re-occurrences, relevant staff are to implement any required changes which they feel appropriate. If the matter cannot be easily

remedied by the officer, he or she must liaise with his/her Manager or the CEO to agree on a course of action.

Where the complaint identifies a need for a change of Council policy in a particular area or a need for additional resources, the matter shall be referred to Council as early as practicable.

12. The CEO shall establish and maintain an appropriate central record of all complaints. The record will provide the following:
 - a) nature of each complaint
 - b) services or facilities about which the complaints are made
 - c) time taken to conclude complaint investigations
 - d) outcomes
 - e) trends
 - f) other relevant information.
13. The designated receiving officer of any complaint shall be responsible for ensuring that all details pertaining to the complaint are recorded in the system established under clause 12.
14. The CEO shall submit half-yearly reports to Council on the recorded complaints received together with a report on the operations of this Complaints Handling Policy.

AMENDED by Res: 260610 / 22 June 2010