



1/026 Customer Feedback, Complaints and Suggestions

1. Objective

This Policy provides a guideline for processing customers' feedback, complaints and suggestions to improve the Town's customer service. In addition, this policy is to be read in conjunction with the Customer Service Charter which will ensure that all internal and external requests and enquiries are acknowledged promptly and courteously as well as investigated efficiently, effectively and comprehensively.

The Town is dedicated to ensuring all customers' concerns are handled in a manner which is fair and courteous, and respects the privacy of the person.

2. Content

The Town is committed to providing quality customer service. Should any customer be dissatisfied with the provision of services or products by the Town and/or its contractors or actions of employees, there is a process to resolve the customers concern at the first point of contact. Feedback is always welcomed, whether positive or negative, to enable service improvement.

All Town employees are required to treat customers politely and professionally.

When customers contact the Town, they should expect:

- To be heard and listened to;
- To be informed;
- To be understood and taken seriously;
- To be treated with respect;
- To be given an explanation or reason for a decision;
- To get action or resolution as soon as possible; and
- To be given an apology, where appropriate.

3. Customer Feedback, Complaints and Suggestion Handling Procedure

The Town of Port Hedland recognises the right of customers to discuss matters when feeling dissatisfied with services of the local government and, wherever possible, to resolve these issues and to prevent similar occurrences.



There are three different levels of escalation that the Town uses to process customers feedback, complaints and suggestions.

Level 1 – Initial Assessment of the Customer’s feedback and suggestions

This process promotes the instant resolution of a customer request. A Town employee will process details into the Town’s system and direct the customer to discuss the matter with a responsible officer. The responsible officer will endeavour to resolve customer concerns wherever possible and discuss with the customer what he/she would like to happen to resolve the issue. The customer will receive a follow-up call or email from the responsible officer to acknowledge the customers concern within 48 business hours of lodging their feedback or suggestion.

*Level 2 – Customer Complaints**

This process provides an opportunity for a customer to lodge an official complaint and a review is carried out within 10 business days. If a complaint requires extensive investigation, an extension of time will be discussed with the complainant.

All complaints must be lodged in writing and include the complainants contact details. Each complaint will be acknowledged and responded to in a timely manner with objectivity and fairness. Complainants are required to provide sufficient information for their complaint to be investigated otherwise it will be deemed unsubstantial. A responsible manager will provide an appropriate response to the complaint on the Town’s behalf.

Level 3 – Chief Executive Officer Internal Review

Where a customer is unhappy with the findings of the initial complaint, he/she has a right to request the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to carry out an internal review on their complaint. The CEO will review all actions that has taken place and will determine a course of action to resolve the complaint. The CEO will inform the customer of the outcome of the final review by letter, or discuss the possible resolution of the complaint by telephone or in a meeting, within 15 business days of being assigned to the CEO.

The complaint will be closed detailing all action taken to resolve the complaint.



4. Elected Member Complaints

Elected Member complaints should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance.

The Town is committed to investigating and addressing any complaints made against Elected Members, including compliance with any statutory requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*, *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007* or any other relevant Act or Regulation, applicable to Elected Members in the performance of their role and responsibilities.

Whether complaints be of minor or serious misconduct, the Town will refer these complaints to the relevant agencies; for example, allegations of corruption will be referred to the Corruption and Crime Commission; allegations of other illegal behaviour may be referred to Western Australian Police or to the State Government Department responsible for Local Government.

5. Unreasonable or Unacceptable Complainants

The Town is required to manage unsuitable customer conduct and unreasonable or excessive demands placed upon Town employees, Elected Members and resources. This will include the Town having options to redress and identify circumstances that could enable the Town to limit its communications with complainants.

There are four categories determining whether a complainant is being unreasonable or using unacceptable behaviour;

- a) Complainants who are being unreasonably persistent and who:
 - i. Make excessive phone calls; or
 - ii. Seek to exercise excessive personal contact; or
 - iii. Engage in lengthy correspondence.
- b) Complainants who cannot be satisfied – i.e. people who demonstrate an unreasonable lack of co-operation as they:
 - i. Cannot or will not accept that the Town is unable to assist them; or
 - ii. Cannot or will not accept that the Town is unable to provide any further level of service, other than that provided already; or
 - iii. Disagree with the action the Town has taken in relation to that complaint or concerns.
- c) Complainants who make unreasonable demands – i.e. people who make unreasonable demands on the Town whether by:
 - i. The amount of information; or
 - ii. The value and scale of services they seek; or

- iii. The number of approaches they make.
- d) Complainants who are rude and abusive – i.e. people who:
 - i. Engage in personal abuse; or
 - ii. Make inflammatory statements or comments; or
 - iii. Make statements or comments clearly intended to intimidate.

Managing unacceptable or unreasonable complaints

There are very few customer complaints which the Town considers unacceptable or unreasonable. How the Town aims to manage these complaints will depend on the nature and extent of the complaint. If it adversely affects the Town employee's ability to do work and provide a service to others, the Town may need to restrict a person's contact in order to manage the unacceptable or unreasonable complaint or action.

Guiding principles on limiting access to unreasonable or unacceptable complainants

The Town will limit the nature and scope of access in the following circumstances:

- a) Where full access would be likely to compromise Town's obligations as an employer
- b) Where full access would be likely to compromise any statutory obligations to which Town is subject
- c) Where full access would be likely to be wasteful of Town's resources whether through excessive contact or use of services
- d) Where full access would be likely to encourage or allow rude and abusive behaviour.

When someone repeatedly telephones, visits the Town's offices without appointment, sends irrelevant or duplicate documents or raises the same issues already considered, the Town may decide to:

- Only take phone calls from the user at set times on set days, or put arrangements into place for only one employee to deal with calls or correspondence from the complainant in future;
- Require the person to make an appointment to see a named employee before visiting the Town's offices, or that the user only contacts the Town's offices in writing;
- Take other action that the Town consider appropriate, however, the Town will always disclose what action they are taking and why;
- Where a complainant continues to correspond on a wide range of issues and this action is considered excessive, then the Town will communicate that only a certain number of issues will be considered in a given period and ask them to limit or focus their requests accordingly; and



- Issue a response stating that the Town will cease communication and will no longer issue correspondence going forward.

Action may be considered unreasonably persistent if all internal review mechanisms have been exhausted and the complainants continues to dispute the decisions the Town have made – be it in the determination of a complaint or the manner in which the case was handled.

The Town will report customers to the Western Australia Police in circumstances where they are verbally or physically aggressive, threatening or harass a Town employee.

6. External Agencies

The Town is confident it can resolve a majority of all customer complaints received, however the Town may not be able to satisfy every customer on every occasion. A customer may contact external agencies if dissatisfied with the Town’s processes. There are several external agencies that investigate complaints made in relation to local governments which can include but are not limited to the following:

- Ombudsman Western Australia;
- Department of State Government Department responsible for Local Government;
- Western Australia Police Force; or
- Crime and Corruption Commission.

Definitions

* **“Complaint”** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Town of Port Hedland, its employees or contractors, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

“Complainant” A complainant is a person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.

Relevant legislation	Nil
Delegated authority	Nil
Business unit	Customer Service
Directorate	Development, Sustainability and Lifestyle



<i>Governance to complete this section</i>			
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	V01	-	-
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