



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Unit: <i>Revenue Unit</i>	First Implemented: 21 January 2014 Reviewed: 15 February 2016 Effective From: 19 April 2016 Review Date: 30 April 2018 Version: 2 Trim Reference: E698/E512	Origin: Initiated by: <i>Records Administrator</i> Draft finalised by: <i>Finance & Information Services Manager and Governance Co-ordinator</i>
Governance Use Only <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft to EMT for comment on: 22 February 2016• Staff consultation required: Yes• Reviewed by Audit & Risk Advisory Committee: No• Endorsed by Council: 19 April 2016		

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate Mansfield Shire Council's commitment to delivering best customer service for all customers at all times and in doing so, recognise Council's preparedness for ongoing accountability and continuous improvement to achieve this goal.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Mansfield Shire Council employees, Councillors and contractors.

DEFINITIONS

Customer: A purchaser or user of products/services of Council. This may include external customers such as ratepayers, residents, clients, organisations, "constituents" or "stakeholders", businesses, government agencies, contractors and consultants, and internal customers, ie: Councillors and other staff members.

Customer Service: The interaction with Council's Customers, before, during or after a service or information has been provided by Council.

Standards: A set of instructions or guide for performing operations or functions to ensure uniform methods, processes, practices and outcomes.



POLICY STATEMENT

Mansfield Shire Council is committed to providing its customers with a consistently professional, friendly and high-quality service.

We will provide quality services to meet the needs and expectations of our community. The principles in this Policy apply to all Council services, and outline the response that can be expected by our community and visitors to our Shire.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Mansfield Shire Council employees, Councillors and contractors are responsible for adhering to and implementing this policy.

Adherence to the Customer Service Policy will be overseen by the Finance & Information Services Department with any associated procedures implemented by the Customer Services Co-ordinator and Finance & Information Services Manager.

The Finance and Information Services Department is the owner of this policy. Any reviews of this Policy must be made in consultation with the Customer Services Co-ordinator and Finance & Information Services Manager.

REFERENCES

- Local Government Act (1989), Part 1A Objectives, Function of Council, Part 4 Conduct Principles
- Mansfield Shire Council 2013-17 Council Plan (specifically Goal 1 – Driving Organisational Performance and Resource Management)
- Australian New Zealand Standards for Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for codes of conduct for organisations AS/NZS ISO 10001:2012

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is effective from 19 April 2016.

REVIEW DATE

This Policy is to be reviewed by 30 April 2018.

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this Policy at any time.

AUTHORISATION TO IMPLEMENT POLICY

Signed: 
Councillor

Witnessed: 
Chief Executive Officer

Dated: 19 April 2016



PROCEDURES

CUSTOMER SERVICE PRINCIPLES

Our Commitment

The Council will, at all times:

- approach all of our customers with respect, honesty and in a courteous and confidential manner.
- actively listen and respond appropriately to the varying needs of our community.
- provide information that is current and can be easily understood.
- build trusted relationships with the community.

Customer Service Standards

Internal and external customers need to know what level of service they can expect. By establishing and communicating Customer Service Standards, customer expectations can be effectively managed and performance of service areas can be monitored. Council's performance will be regularly measured against these Standards below to ensure they are met and identify any areas requiring improvement.

Our Responsiveness

Telephone:

- We will answer ringing phones promptly; we will identify ourselves and our organisation.
- We will make every effort to answer your questions and assist with your request at the time.
- If the person that you are trying to contact is not available when you call you will be able to leave a message and you will receive a return call within two working days. In the case of part-time services that are offered by Council, eg, Financial Counselling and Family Counselling, customers and clients will receive a return call within 4 working days or as advised on the service's recorded message.

Counter enquiries:

- We will make every effort to assist you and take time to explain outcomes.
- We will wear a name badge to identify ourselves and assist you promptly and courteously.

Written Correspondence (Letters faxes and emails):

- We will acknowledge your correspondence within five working days.
- We will provide a response to your correspondence by either providing an answer in full or date indicating when the matter will be resolved within 10 working days.



- If you email an officer, a return email will let you know if the person is not available.
- If our response times are not met, the customer is entitled to an explanation and assistance from the relevant manager, who will review the matter.

Customer Requests (CRMS):

- All customer requests will be logged in Council's CRMS system. We will respond within the following timelines:
 - *Dogs*
Respond to urgent dog requests. 7 days a week
 - *Environmental Health*
Respond to food complaints. Within 24 hours or next business day
 - *Roads and Footpaths*
Inspect and assess urgent requests about damage. Within 2 working days
 - *Waste*
Missed Garbage collection or report of stolen bin. Within 3 working days
Any safety Matters that places the community at risk. Immediately
 - *Drainage Issues*
Inspect and assess urgent requests. Within 2 working days
 - *Dumped Rubbish*
Inspect and collect. Within 5 working days
 - *Planning Permit Application*
From date of lodgement Within 60 working days
(in accordance of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* Statutory time frames.)

Feedback

We will welcome feedback and treat it as an opportunity to enhance our service. We will monitor our performance on a regular basis generating opportunities for improvement.

Accessibility

During normal business hours Council is committed to being accessible to the community.

After Hours Contact

We will provide an after hours telephone service that will operate via the usual Council telephone number. All urgent matters will be referred to a Council officer immediately. Non urgent matters will be referred to a Council officer on the following business day.



Unacceptable Actions

We believe that our customers and service users have a right to be heard, understood and respected.

Occasionally, certain actions by people using our services can make it very difficult for us to deal with their enquiry or concern.

In a small number of cases the actions of some individuals become unacceptable because they involve abuse of our staff or our processes. When this happens we have to take appropriate steps. We have to consider whether the action impacts on our ability to do our work and to provide a service to others.

People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. We do not view an action as unacceptable just because a person is forceful or determined. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our staff to be unacceptable. It is these actions that we aim to manage under this policy.

Actions we consider to be unacceptable are aggressive or abusive behaviour and/or unreasonable demands.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour

We understand that people can become angry when they feel that matters about which they feel strongly are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into aggression towards our staff, we consider that unacceptable.

Any aggression or abuse directed towards our staff will not be tolerated.

Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused and may include threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness.

We also consider inflammatory statements, remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature and unsubstantiated allegations, to be abusive behaviour.

Unreasonable Demands

A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact excessively on the work of our staff. Or when dealing with the matter takes up an excessive amount of staff time and in so doing, disadvantages other customers or service users.

For example:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale;
- Demanding responses from several members of staff on the same subject;
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible;
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an enquiry or complaint or raising unrelated concerns;
- Repeatedly posing a question time and again, when a response has already been given, because the individual may not like the answer they have received.



How we manage aggressive or abusive behaviour

The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards our staff is likely to result in a termination of all direct contact with the customer or service user. Such incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

Where correspondence (either letter, fax or electronic) that is abusive to staff or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence is received, we will inform the sender that we consider their language offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful and ask them to stop using such language. We will ask that the sender edit their correspondence to remove any offensive text and resend it, otherwise it will not be responded to.

Staff will end telephone calls if they consider the caller aggressive, abusive or offensive. Our staff have the right to make this decision, to tell the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and to end the call if the behaviour then persists.

In extreme situations, we will advise the person in writing that we will not permit any personal contact from them. This means that we will limit contact with them to either written communication or through a third party.

How we deal with other categories of unreasonable behaviour

Where a member of the public repeatedly phones, visits our offices, raises the same issue repeatedly, or sends us large numbers of documents about which the relevance is not clear, we may decide to:

- Restrict contact to a nominated member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence;
- See the person by appointment only;
- Restrict contact to written correspondence only;
- Take any other action that we consider appropriate to the circumstances.
- Where someone repeatedly demands a response on an issue on which they have already been given a clear answer by the Council, we may refuse to respond to further enquiries from the person.

REQUIRED SERVICES	OUR STANDARD
Answer your telephone call.	Within 5 rings
Reply to general correspondence by either providing an answer in full or date indicating when the matter will be resolved.	Within 10 working days
Keeping you informed.	Notify you if there is a delay in our service commitment within 10 working days
Missed visits – we will leave a “visit card” with contact details if we call to your residence and you are not at home.	100% of the time
If Council can’t provide the service you require, we will endeavor to refer you to where the service may be available.	100% of the time
Dogs Respond to urgent dog requests.	7 days a week
Environmental Health Respond to food complaints.	Within 24 hours or the next business day.
Roads and Footpaths Inspect and assess urgent requests about damage.	Within 2 working days
Waste Missed Garbage collection or report of stolen bin.	Within 3 working days
Any Safety Matters That places the community at risk.	Immediately
Drainage Issues Inspect and assess urgent requests.	Within 2 working days
Dumped Rubbish Inspect and collect.	Within 5 working days
Planning Permit Applications From date of lodgement.	Within 60 working days in accordance with the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> statutory time frames

CONTACT DETAILS

Mansfield municipal office:

33 Highett Street, Mansfield

Council offices are open Monday to Friday between 8.15am and 5.00pm

Telephone: (03) 5775 8555

Email: council@mansfield.vic.gov.au

Fax: (03) 5775 2677

Web: www.mansfield.vic.gov.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mansfieldshirecouncil/

In Writing:

Mansfield Shire Council

Private Bag 1000

Mansfield Vic 3724

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Victorian Ombudsman

Web: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Telephone: 03 9613 6222

Toll Free: 1800 806 314

Department of Local Government

Web: www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/local-government

Telephone: (03) 9208 3333

COMPLAINTS

“Complaints” are different from “Requests For Service”. A “complaint” results if you are not satisfied with our service standards in any respect, or if we have made a mistake. If this happens, please bring your complaint to us directly so that we can resolve the issue and improve our service for the future.



Mansfield Shire Council

Customer Service Charter

Our Customer Service Charter sets out in plain language:

- ◆ What services we provide.
- ◆ What standard of service we will provide.
- ◆ How these service levels will be measured.
- ◆ What you can do if we don't meet those standards.



Why a Customer Service Charter?

The Mansfield Shire Council Customer service Charter sets out Council's service standards, and explains what you as our customer can do if we have not delivered a service to that standard.

This Charter has been developed to further build and enhance relationships and partnerships with our community and customers, and to enable a system for continuous improvement to our levels of customer service.

Who are our Customers?

Our customers are any persons or any organisation that have any type of dealings with Council. This includes residents, ratepayers, business operators, Council staff, contractors, elected members and visitors to our Shire.

Our Commitment

The Council will, at all times:

- ◆ approach all of our customers with respect, honesty and in a courteous and confidential manner.
- ◆ actively listen and respond appropriately to the varying needs of our community.
- ◆ provide information that is current and can be easily understood.
- ◆ build trusted relationships with the community.
- ◆ We will have our customer service counters attended at all times, and we will answer and return telephone calls promptly.
- ◆ We will keep you informed of the progress of your enquiry.
- ◆ We will respect your privacy, and be helpful and sensitive to your needs.

What you can expect from Mansfield Shire Council

Our Responsiveness

Telephone

- ◆ We will answer ringing phones promptly; we will identify ourselves and our organisation.
- ◆ We will make every effort to answer your questions and assist with your request at the time.
- ◆ If the person that you are trying to contact is not available when you call you will be able to leave a message and you will receive a return call within **two working days**. In the case of part-time services that are offered by Council, eg, Financial Counselling and Family Counselling, customers and clients will receive a return call within **4 working days** or as advised on the service's recorded message.
- ◆ Our recorded message will advise you if the person you have called is unavailable for more than **two working days** or, in the case of part-time services offered by Council, as advised on the service's recorded message.

Counter enquiries

- ◆ We will make every effort to assist you and take time to explain outcomes.
- ◆ We will wear a name badge to identify ourselves and assist you promptly and courteously.

Letters, emails and faxes

- ◆ We will acknowledge your written correspondence **within five working days**.
- ◆ We will provide a written response to your correspondence within **10 working days**.
- ◆ If you email an officer, a return email will let you know if the person is not available for more than **two working days**.
- ◆ If our response times are not met, the customer is entitled to an explanation and assistance from the relevant manager, who will review the matter.

Feedback

We will welcome feedback and treat it as an opportunity to enhance our service. We will monitor our performance on a regular basis generating opportunities for improvement.

Accessibility

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After Hours Contact

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What if we can not assist you?

We will work with you to solve problems, and refer you to an appropriate organisation if we are unable to meet your request.

What do we ask of you?

- ◆ To treat our staff with mutual respect.
- ◆ To respect the rights of other customers.
- ◆ To provide accurate and complete information in your dealings with us.
- ◆ To respect the community in which we live.
- ◆ To work with us to solve problems.

How will we measure our service?

- ◆ We will regularly survey our community.
- ◆ We will invite written feedback at Council offices.
- ◆ We will report yearly on our service levels.