

TEMORA SHIRE COUNCIL



TEMORA
The Friendly Shire

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

ACTIVE

Review Details

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify mutual obligations in relation to customer contact with Council staff.

2. Definitions

Council staff – Refers to all staff employed by Temora Shire Council

Organisation – Refers to Temora Shire Council

Customer – Refers to all entities, internal and external that have interaction with the organisation.

Customer Service Centres – Administration Building, Bundawarra Centre, Pinnacle Community Services Offices, Library, Temora Art Centre, Platform Y, Town Hall Theatre and Temora Recreation Centre.

3. Background/legislative requirements

This Policy sets a standard for a quality customer contact experience for all parties who contact Council staff and establishes a customer service standard at an organisational level and recognises that delivery of quality customer service is a core responsibility of all Council staff.

4. Protocols

Council is committed to the achievement of high standards across all aspects of customer contact and the ongoing review and improvement of those standards. Council staff will always, treat customers with respect, courtesy, dignity, fairness, and efficiency.

5. Council commitment to provide services

Council commits to:

- Formally recognising that our customers are our priority. It is important that we keep our customers informed and provide accurate and timely responses to customer requests for information or services.
- Developing a customer first culture throughout the organisation by providing staff with the tools they need to deliver excellent customer service including training and education and access to the appropriate systems, processes, and technologies.
- Ensuring equitable access to council services and information for all customers regardless of disability, ethnicity, language, or age.
- Regularly reviewing and updating the portals used for customer contact by seeking customer feedback on preferred contact methods, staying abreast of technological advancements, reviewing internal processes and procedures as necessary.
- Developing measurable service standards for customer contact to guide officers in their dealings with customers, to provide certainty for customers on when they can expect their requests to be responded to and to ensure that standards are consistently being met.

- Upholding the provisions of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, and the *National Privacy Act*, including maintaining confidentiality for customers in all matters in strict accordance with those statutes.
- Promoting mutually respectful and courteous interactions between customers and Council staff by applying Council's Code of Conduct to the actions of staff and by protecting, supporting, and equipping our staff to manage customers who display an unacceptable level of rudeness, profane language, or aggression towards them.
- Prompt and efficient services.
- Easy access to our services.
- Friendly, professional service.
- Accurate and consistent information.

All staff should note that Temora Shire Council has a zero-tolerance policy towards any harm, abuse or threats directed towards them. Any conduct of this kind will be dealt with under the Managing Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants Policy, and in accordance with Council's duty of care and work health and safety responsibilities.

6. What you can do to help us

- Treat our staff in a polite and respectful manner.
- Be honest and accurate in your dealings with Council.
- Work with us to solve problems.
- Give us feedback on the things we do.
- Respect community property.

7. Definition of customer service commitment

7.1 Face to face

- Wherever possible face to face enquiries at Council's Customer Service Centre will be dealt with on the spot.
- Where an answer cannot be provided immediately, the customer's details will be taken, and their enquiry will be referred to the appropriate area of Council for a formal response within 10 business days.
- If a formal response is required inside 10 business days (e.g. relating to a rates enquiry and the due date for payment is less than 10 business days away) every endeavour will be made to respond in the required timeframe and/or to protect the customers' rights regarding deadlines.

7.2 Telephone

- Council staff will answer telephone calls promptly.
- Council staff will strive to resolve telephone enquiries at the first point of contact.
- If staff cannot provide an on-the-spot answer, they will provide a contact name and telephone number and details as to when the caller can expect to be contacted regarding their enquiry.

7.3 Correspondence (mail)

- Written enquiries to Council, requiring a response, will be responded to within 10 business days.
- Where a matter is complex and cannot fully be answered within 10 business days, Council staff will make contact either by telephone, mail, or email to advise that the enquiry has been received and to provide an estimated date for finalisation.

7.4 Internet/email

- Council will respond to email enquiries received through Council's temshire@temora.nsw.gov.au inbox in the same way as other correspondence, i.e. a full response within 10 business days or less, or in lieu of that, an interim response with an estimated date for finalisation.
- Where Council staff are emailed directly, and a response is required, a response will be provided within 10 business days unless the matter is more complex in which case an interim response will be provided with the full response to follow within 5 business days. If the email is highly complex requiring significant analysis, internal communication etc., the response may take longer than 5 business days and the customer will be provided an estimated timeframe.
- Communication to Council via social media is not considered a formal method of communication and other methods should be utilised.

7.5 Customer contact quality standards

The following standards will be applied to all customer contact:

- For face-to-face enquiries employees will have their identification displayed or readily available for observation upon request.
- For telephone enquiries employees will identify themselves by name when answering.
- Customers will at all times be treated with courtesy and respect and their enquiry will be dealt with in good faith.
- Customers will be provided with honest and accurate information and where a staff member is not able to provide a response the matter will promptly be forwarded to another employee with the appropriate expertise.
- Where Council is found to be in error, employees will take ownership of the error by acknowledging that Council has not met expectations and advising the customer of the remedial action that will be taken to redress the situation; and privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, *Privacy Act 1988*.

7.5.1 Prompt and efficient services

We respond quickly and effectively to your service requests by:

- Having defined service standards for most occurring service situations.
- Record all works or services requests from customers into CRM for actioning and resolving with the relevant department.
- For work or services request, we will provide the CRM identification number to the Customer for future reference.
- CRM requests are actioned within Council's standard timeframe.

Whether you phone, drop in personally, write or email us, we will strive to:

- Answer your phone calls promptly.
- Attend to face-to-face enquiries promptly.
- Acknowledge your letters and emails within 10 business days.
- Stick to agreed appointment times.
- Inform you of the best ways to access services from your Council.
- Provide “After Hours” service for requests of an urgent nature.
- Provide access to council information through our website.

7.5.2 Friendly, professional services

We provide all Council services in a friendly and professional manner by:

- Treating you politely and with respect.
- Identifying ourselves when we talk to you.
- Listening carefully to what you say.
- Treating your personal information with confidentiality.
- Being helpful and sensitive to your needs.
- Being competent in providing the information and services that Council has determined to provide to its community.
- Being friendly as well as professional.

7.5.3 Accurate and consistent information

We do our best to provide the information you need by:

- Clearly outlining our policies, systems and service standards where this information is needed.
- Giving you time to fully explain your situation and needs.
- Using plain, respectful language with a minimum of jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.
- Knowing about the services we provide or knowing where to access this information quickly.
- Not unnecessarily quoting rules and regulations or details you do not need.
- Considering the information you need, not just the question you ask.

7.5.4 Consult you when developing and improving products and services

We will seek your input in regard to the provision of services by Temora Shire Council in accordance with our Community Consultation Policy.

7.5.5 Fix our mistakes willingly

We willingly and reliably respond to complaints and errors by:

- Listening carefully to your situation and clarifying your needs.
- Apologising where we have made a mistake or caused delays.
- Informing you of the options open to yourself and Council.
- Taking ownership of any Council errors.
- Acting to fix the problems and mistakes quickly where we are able.
- Following up to ensure you know what we did.

8. Complaints

We will respond to any complaints that we receive in accordance with our Complaints Management Policy.

9. Customer feedback

Council welcomes feedback in relation to customer service. Feedback may be provided using any of the communication methods outlined in this policy.

10. Customers who make unreasonable demands

Customers who make unreasonable demands include members of the public whose demands on Council staff significantly and unreasonably divert Council's resources away from other functions or create the inequitable allocation of resources to other customers. Such demands may result from the amount of information requested, the nature or scale of services sought or the number of approaches seeking information, assistance, or service.

Customers who make unreasonable demands on Council will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Managing Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants Policy.

11. Customers who cannot be satisfied

Customers who cannot be satisfied include members of the public and groups who do not accept that Council is unable to assist them, provide any further assistance or level of service that has been provided already and/or disagree with the action Council has taken in relation to the complaint or concern.

A customer who cannot be satisfied, and when all appropriate avenues of internal review or appeal have been exhausted and the customer continues to write, telephone, email and/or visit Council, will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Managing Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants Policy.

12. Customers who are rude, abusive, or aggressive

Rude, abusive, or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of either a personal or general nature, sarcastic or offensive remarks directed personally to officers, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property or physical violence against a person.

If, in the opinion of any staff member, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made when interacting with a customer, the staff member may:

- Warn the customer that if the behaviour continues the conversation will be terminated.
- Terminate the conversation if the rude, abusive, or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.
- Call upon a manager or Police, as appropriate, if there is a perceived threat.

The safety of staff is a priority for Council. This Customer Service Policy is a mechanism to ensure staff safety through the provision of a safe and healthy work environment.

13. Vexatious complaints

A person who continues to make representation by way of correspondence, telephone, email or personal representation, that has no basis in fact and/or is undertaken with frivolous or mischievous motives may be declared a vexatious complainant and will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy.

14. General

In all the situations referred to in this policy, adequate documentary records must be made and maintained. Where the General Manager determines to limit a customer's access to Council in any of the ways specified in this policy, the General Manager must advise the Council as soon as possible of the relevant circumstances and the action taken.

15. Council contact details

Admin Office: 105 Loftus Street, Temora
Telephone: 02 6980 1100
Postal: PO Box 262, Temora NSW 2666
Email: temshire@temora.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.temora.nsw.gov.au

16. Council Office hours

Admin Office: 8.00 am to 4.30pm

Service NSW: 8.30am to 12.30pm
1.30pm to 4.00 pm

17. After hours service

Council offers an after-hours service for urgent matters on 6980 1100. The on-call officer will take the necessary details such customer contact, location and type of emergency.

18. Online services

Council's website offers a wealth of information and items that may be useful to customers. The site is www.temora.nsw.gov.au.