

Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Author	General Manager Corporate Services
Date of next review	February 2028

1. Statement of Intent

Council delivers an extensive range of services, programs, and infrastructure to the local community. Council welcomes complaints as an important part of continuous quality improvements in the delivery of services and customer experience.

Council is committed to handling and resolving complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively and treating complainants equally and respectfully.

This Policy, together with the Complaints Handling Procedure, is intended to:

- enable Council to respond to complaints in a timely and consistent manner;
- enhance public confidence in the Council; and
- provide information that Council can use to inform service improvements.

Emphasis will be placed on resolving complaints as quickly as possible, however, where complaints cannot be settled in the first instance, Council will ensure that they are dealt with through the appropriate processes and procedures.

This Policy is based on five principles which are fundamental to the way Council approaches complaint handling.

Fairness

- Each complaint will be addressed with integrity and in an equitable and unbiased manner.
- Each complaint will be assessed on its merits.
- The person handling the complaint will be different to any staff member whose service, action or conduct is being complained about.
- Conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation.

Accessibility

- Council will ensure this Policy is accessible on Council's website and a range of contact options are available to allow the public to make a complaint.
- Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that no one making a complaint is adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.
- There is no charge to make a complaint to the Council.
- Council accepts anonymous complaints where there is enough information provided to investigate the issue raised.

- If a person prefers or needs assistance in making and/or resolving their complaint, Council will communicate with them through their representative if that is their wish.

Responsiveness

- Council will acknowledge receipt of complaints promptly and is committed to managing people's expectations and keeping them informed as to the progress of their complaint, including when initial timeframes cannot be met.
- Complaints will be prioritised based on urgency and/or seriousness of the issue being complained about.
- Council will advise people as soon as possible if their complaint is unable to be dealt with and will provide advice as to where their complaint may be directed (if known and appropriate).

Efficiency

- Council will seek to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible.
- Where necessary and appropriate for the efficient and effective management of a complaint, integration of different areas of the Council will occur.

Confidentiality

- Council will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practicable and appropriate.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints from the public about the actions of the Council, employees of the Council and other persons acting on behalf of the Council, except where this Policy provides otherwise.

This Policy does not apply to matters that do not fall within Council's jurisdiction. Some complaints may fall outside the scope of this Policy as an alternative statutory process may exist in other legislation.

All employees who may be involved in receiving, processing, managing, considering or responding to a complaint in the course of their official functions and duties as an employee of the Council must abide by this Policy.

Staff grievances, code of conduct or Behavioural Standards complaints, requests for the provision of a service or the improvement of a service, requests for an internal review of a Council decision and disclosures of public interest information are dealt with through separate mechanisms.

3. Legislation and References

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Complaints Handling Procedure.

Related documents include:

- *Local Government Act 1999* – Section 270
- *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2012* (ICAC Act)
- *Ombudsman Act 1972*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*
- Behavioural Standards for Council Members

- Internal Review of a Council Decision Procedure
- Request for Service Policy and Procedure
- Behavioural Management Policy and Procedure
- Code of Conduct for Council Employees
- Public Interest Disclosure Procedure
- City of Playford Global Glossary

This Policy should not be considered as the only document that may relate to complaints handling, other tiers of government, agencies or organisations may have legislation or policies that also apply.

4. Application

Council	Adopt a Complaints Handling Policy.
Council Members	Ensure any complaints received are referred to an employee to process.
Chief Executive Officer	Ensure the Complaints Handling Policy is implemented and subject to periodic evaluation and review.
Employees	Ensure the Policy principles are applied when dealing with complaints and appropriately allocate and manage complaints as received.

5. Relevance to Risk Appetite Statement

Regulatory Compliance

The City of Playford has **ZERO TOLERANCE** for non-compliance with applicable legislation.

This Policy addresses this risk by ensuring compliance with Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999*, which requires Council to develop and maintain policies, practices and procedures for dealing with complaints about the actions of the Council, employees of the Council, or other persons acting on behalf of the Council.

Service Delivery

The City of Playford has a **MODERATE** appetite for supporting and enhancing existing services and programs to improve the social, recreation and health and wellbeing outcomes for residents.

This Policy addresses this risk by ensuring that Council has procedures and processes in place to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for Council's customers if they are dissatisfied with a Council action, decision or service and wish to lodge a complaint.

Reputation

The City of Playford has a **LOW** appetite for negative perceptions that compromise its credibility and reputation.

This Policy addresses the risk to reputation by ensuring appropriate procedures and processes to manage complaints are documented in policy and provides a structured, transparent and accountable complaints handling process for the community.

6. Feedback

Your feedback on this Policy is invited and can be directed to the Manager Governance via email to governance@playford.sa.gov.au or by calling the Customer Contact Team on 8256 0333.

Administration use only

ECM document set no.	3978347
Version no.	5
Procedure link	Complaints Handling Procedure
Policy author	General Manager Corporate Services
Endorsed by	Council
Resolution no.	5748
Legal requirement	<i>Local Government Act 1999</i> – Section 270
Review schedule	Every 4 years
Date of current version	February 2024
Date of next review	February 2028

Version history

Version no.	Approval date	Approval by	Change
1	23 March 2010	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 1555	New Policy
2	22 March 2016	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 2519	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Corporate Template• Change of Policy Name• Entire Re-Structure• Incorporation of additional elements as per section 270 of the Local Government Act 1999
3	28 February 2017	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 2805	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addition of review timeframe for Tier 3 complaints – Internal review of a Council decision.• Addition of the Rate Relief Policy under 5.5

4	25 May 2021	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 4629	Scheduled review.
5	27 February 2024	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 5748	Reference to Code of Conduct for Council Members substituted with Behavioural Management Policy and Procedure.
