

# Complaints Handling Procedure

Procedure Author	General Manager - Strategy & Corporate
Date of next review	June 2023

## 1. Purpose

This Procedure commences at the point that a complaint is received by the Council and covers the process for:

- receiving, managing and resolving complaints;
- using complaints to inform service improvements.

The aim of this Procedure is to ensure that the Council handles complaints fairly, effectively and efficiently. Council employees will act with integrity, impartially, demonstrate good customer service and undertake their responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner, using their judgement where necessary to ensure outcomes in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy.

## 2. References and Supporting Documentation

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

## 3. Application

Council Members	Ensure any complaints received are referred to an employee to process.
Chief Executive Officer	Ensure the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure 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 received, in accordance with this Procedure.

## 4. Procedure

### 4.1 Making a Complaint

4.1.1 Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- By phone: 8256 0333
- Email: [Playford@playford.sa.gov.au](mailto:Playford@playford.sa.gov.au)
- In writing: 12 Bishopstone Road  
Davoren Park SA 5113

In person: 10 Playford Boulevard  
Elizabeth SA 5112

- 4.1.2 It is essential that no one is excluded from making a complaint because of any difficulties they may have doing so. All employees are expected to offer assistance where appropriate and upon request, including assistance with documenting the complaint in writing when circumstances warrant. If necessary access to interpreters, aids or advocates will be arranged to ensure that everyone is treated equitably.
- 4.1.3 A person making a complaint will generally be required to:
- Identify the issue and if applicable who is the subject of the complaint;
  - Identify themselves by Name, Address, Contact Number(s) and/or Email Address;
  - Be specific and provide as much information as possible relevant to the complaint and to assist with the assessment and/or investigation of the issue raised
- 4.1.4 A person making a verbal complaint will be encouraged to put their complaint in writing, but will not be required to do so unless the request pertains to a Code of Conduct matter relating to a Council Member. Code of Conduct complaints relating to a Council Member must be made in writing, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Council Members Complaints Handling Procedure.
- 4.1.5 If a person does not wish to put their complaint in writing, verbal complaints will be documented by the Council employee receiving the complaint. An employee receiving a verbal complaint may ask the person making the complaint to put it in writing, if the request is complex.

## 4.2 Receiving, managing and resolving complaints

- 4.2.1 Complaints handling generally consists of two stages:

### **Stage 1 - Immediate response to resolve a complaint**

It is preferable that complaints are dealt with promptly at the initial point of contact and at the appropriate officer level. Accordingly, all Council employees are empowered to handle and attempt to resolve complaints in the first instance. Dealing with a complaint at this level can include referral to another officer to deal with the complaint. This would be required in circumstances where the complaint relates to the conduct or actions of a Council employee, where a different employee is required to handle the complaint.

### **Stage 2 - Complaint escalated to a more senior officer**

A complaint will be directed to a more senior employee of the Council, where circumstances indicate that the complaint would be more appropriately handled at a more senior level. This may occur, for example, where an employee has been involved in the issue that is the subject of the complaint, where the complaint is about an issue that requires a decision to be made at a more senior level by an employee with authority to deal with the complaint, or where a complaint concerns a matter that ranges across more than one Council work area.

- 4.2.2 All complaints are to be recorded in Council's corporate records management system as soon as the complaint is received.
- 4.2.3 All complaints received in writing (letter, emails) will be acknowledged within one business day of receipt. For requests made in person, by phone or via online services, these will be acknowledged at the time of receipt.
- 4.2.4 The identity of people making complaints will be protected where it is practicable and appropriate to do so. Personal information about other persons relevant to a complaint, including any adverse findings or conclusions made about other persons, will not be disclosed to the complainant unless disclosure is required by law.
- 4.2.5 A Council Member who receives a complaint is required to refer the complaint to an employee to process.

### **4.3 Anonymous complaints**

- 4.3.1 Anonymous complaints will be investigated by Council where there is enough information provided to investigate the matter.

### **4.4 Unreasonable conduct by a person making a complaint**

- 4.4.1 A person(s) making a complaint has a responsibility to act in a reasonable manner towards employees. Unreasonable conduct including unreasonable demands, argumentative or aggressive behaviour by a person(s) making a complaint may result in no action being taken.

### **4.5 Assignment of complaints**

- 4.5.1 Assignment of a complaint will include determining who will investigate and at what level the complaint should be dealt with in the first instance.
- 4.5.2 A complaint will not be dealt with by an employee whose conduct or actions are the subject of the complaint.
- 4.5.3 Wherever possible complaints will be handled independently of the original decision-maker or employee involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint
- 4.5.4 Complaints that proceed to Stage 2 will be referred to a more senior employee who has the authority and expertise to deal with the complaint.
- 4.5.5 If the complaint relates to the conduct or actions of the Chief Executive Officer, it will be referred to the elected body of the Council and dealt with at the Stage 2 level. In that instance the elected body may seek the assistance of external advisers to assist it in dealing with the complaint and administrative support will be provided to the elected body by the Manager Governance.

## 4.6 Representatives of person(s) making a complaint

- 4.6.1 If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist them in making and/or resolving their complaint, the Council employee dealing with the complaint will request this be communicated by the person in writing to the Council (and will assist the person to do so if required). Once this request has been received, all communication (or such communication as the person requests) will be through their representative.
- 4.6.2 Where similar complaints are made by related parties the Council employee dealing with the complaint will endeavour to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group by requesting the related parties nominate a single representative in writing.

## 5. Feedback

Your feedback on this policy is invited and can be directed to the Manager Governance via email to [governance@playford.sa.gov.au](mailto:governance@playford.sa.gov.au) or by calling the Customer Contact Team on 8256 0333

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### Administration use only

ECM document set no.	3978344
Version no.	3
Policy link	Complaints Handling Policy
Procedure author	General Manager Strategy and Corporate
Endorsed by	Council
Resolution no.	4629
Legal requirement	<i>Local Government Act 1999</i> – Section 270
Review schedule	Every 4 years or within 12 months of a general election
Date of current version	May 2021
Date of next review	June 2023

### Version history

Version no.	Approval date	Approval by	Change
1	22 March 2016	Ordinary Council Resolution No. 2519	New Procedure
2	1 June 2016	Governance	Added to 5.3  Note: If a complaint is received (Tier 2 or 3) but not marked 'Confidential', City of Playford will accept it as

such and treat it  
confidentially.

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25 May 2021

Ordinary Council  
Resolution No. 4629

Comprehensive update.  
Process more concise.  
Removed sections that  
constituted work  
instructions or training  
material. Removed  
references to Internal  
Reviews of Council  
decisions as these do  
not constitute  
complaints.