District Council of
Loxton Waikerie

CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Responsible Officer/s	Director Commercial and Community Services
Relevant Legislation / Documents	Local Government Act Other Policy/Procedure
Adopted	June 2008
Reviewed	March 2025
Next Review	March 2028

A. Purpose

The District Council of Loxton Waikerie is committed to providing quality services to our community. We are continually striving to improve our services through employee and volunteer training, implementation of new technology and consultation.

B. Objective

The Customer Service Policy outlines our commitment to customers in accordance with our Strategic Plan and the standards customers can expect when dealing with Council. It applies to Elected Members, Employees and Volunteers.

C. Policy

Our commitment to customer service

The District Council of Loxton Waikerie is dedicated to delivering timely, efficient, and high-quality services through professional, courteous, and responsive officers. While we strive to meet customer expectations and provide optimal solutions, we acknowledge that complete satisfaction may not always be achievable. As both a service provider and regulatory body, some customer requests may not be fulfilled.

As part of our commitment to you, we will:

- Respect, listen and care for you and your concerns;
- Identify ourselves in all communication with you;
- Respect your privacy and confidentiality;
- Aim to communicate clearly and in plain language;
- Be positive and receptive to feedback;
- Take a fair, balanced and long-term approach with our decisions;
- Provide relevant and up-to-date information relating to our services via our website and publications.

Who are our Customers

A customer is any person or organisation having dealings with the District Council of Loxton Waikerie. Our customers can be internal and include other Departments of Council, Elected Members & colleagues.

Our Service Standards

Where possible we aim to exceed our customer's needs and expectations.

At all times we aim to:

- Treat customers courteously and with respect;
- Deal with customers in a polite and helpful manner;
- Listen to customers and take their views into account;
- Provide customers with necessary and relevant information;
- Treat customers fairly and take account of the customer's particular needs;
- Act on our commitments in a timely manner;
- Value customers privacy by treating all personal information confidentially;
- Be punctual for meetings and appointments;
- Provide Council identification or authorisation if requested

Types of Customer Service

Customers contact Council services for a wide variety of reasons ranging from enquiries and requests for information or advice, to the provision of direct services, i.e., Library Service, Visitor Information Centre enquiries, visits to Swimming Pools and Recreation Centres, the Historical Village, Development Applications, Dog Registrations, etc.

When a customer telephones

Council recognises the importance of telephone calls and staff members will answer all calls promptly and efficiently, referring calls to the appropriate officer quickly and providing clear and concise information in response to caller enquiries.

All staff members aim to:

- Advise all callers of the name of the person answering the call, or
- Deal with the call, redirect the call or take a clear message from the caller as required
- Ensure all messages include details of the caller's name, contact number and message as well as details of who took the message and when.
- When calls cannot be fully responded to immediately, give clear advice to the caller about when the caller can expect a response
- Put calls on hold for the minimum amount of time possible
- Speak clearly, deal with customers calmly, courteously and patiently, even when the callers are distressed
- Answer unattended telephones in the absence of colleagues whenever practical
- Respond to telephone messages within one business day
- Change voicemail message(s) when staff are absent on an extended period of leave
- Have telephone caller enquiries available 24/7 with the use of an after hours call centre. The call centre will answer and log after hours queries in a manner as set out in our policies and standard operating procedures.

Telephone requests for service of a more complex nature will be recorded in our computerised works request system.

When a customer writes, emails or corresponds via the Council website

We recognise the importance of correspondence (letters and email messages) and will provide clear and concise responses promptly.

Social media is not recognised as an official channel for two-way communication between Council and community members. Users will be reminded in publications to direct any further questions to Council via phone or email, or to provide their feedback on Council's community engagement website, when appropriate.

Council reserves the right to remove or hide comments that are rude, defamatory, or inappropriate. Additionally, users who consistently post negative or abusive content on Council's social media platforms may be blocked

We will:

- Provide a response to all matters within 10 working days of receiving the correspondence if the item requires a response. Ensure that all outward correspondence includes the name and contact details of the officer dealing with the matter and Council's file reference
- Use language that is clear and concise

When a customer visits a Council office or facility

We recognise the need to promptly serve members of the public who come to Council or a facility of Council to seek information, transact business or utilise a service. We will endeavour to have officers available to the public during office hours and at designated times.

We aim to:

- Make staff available for interviews by prior arrangement
- Attend to members of the public at the customer service desks in a professional and helpful manner and within five minutes of arrival at reception
- Promptly advise staff if there is a member of the public in the reception area for an appointment
- Provide a full range of information for public inspection in customer service areas
- Speak clearly and deal with visitors calmly, courteously and patiently, even when visitors are angry, aggressive or distressed
- Make appointments to visit a customer external to Council's facilities. At the beginning of any Council visit, staff or Elected Members must clearly identify themselves and the purpose of the visit
- Ensure that all relevant staff are present to address each matter appropriately
- Provide a counter service queuing time of less than 5 minutes

When a customer accesses our services via the Internet

We recognise the importance of providing relevant information to customers in an accessible form.

We aim to:

- Provide information in a format that is clear, concise and up to date.
- Utilise appropriate technology to best meet the service & information needs of our community: this will be considered in the payment of rates, issuing of permits, SMS messaging services from library services, reporting a problem, lodging a works request,

accessing policies, procedures and forms.

Our expectations of our customers

To make our job easier in providing our services we ask our customers to:

- Treat Council Officers with respect;
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community;
- Provide accurate and complete details;
- Telephone to make an appointment for a complex enquiry or a need to see a specific Officer;
- Telephone the Officer nominated on correspondence sent to the customer and quoting the file number on the letter

Dealing with difficult customers

Council staff and volunteers are expected to treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times and make reasonable efforts to address their needs, even in difficult or rude situations. However, there will always be a small percentage of customers whose issues cannot be fully resolved. This may occur when a customer refuses to accept a Council decision, makes demands beyond the Council's capacity, or displays aggression that makes further communication unsafe or unreasonable.
If the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) determines that all efforts have been made to address a customer's needs with no reasonable prospect of resolution, they may decide to stop or limit further communication with the customer. This may include:

- Refusing telephone calls or appointments
- Requesting all future communication in writing
- Responding only to new issues raised
- Assigning a single staff member as the contact person for all communication

If such a decision is made, the CEO will inform the customer in writing and offer the opportunity to respond. Additionally, Elected Members will be notified of the decision, and the CEO will monitor any further contact.

Customers who are Rude, Abusive or Aggressive

Rude, abusive or aggressive behavior may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, intimidating, threatening or offensive behavior, physical violence against property or physical violence against a person.

If, in the opinion of any staff member or volunteer, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made in telephone conversations, interviews, the provision of services, or in Council facilities, the staff member or volunteer may:

- warn the caller that if the behaviour continues, the conversation or interview will be terminated, access to services may be restricted or the customer may be asked to leave the facility.
- terminate the conversation or interview if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.

Where a conversation or interview is terminated, the staff member or volunteer must then inform his/her Manager of the incident and make a diary note of the event. Where appropriate, the Manager will then discuss the matter with the Chief Executive Officer to determine what action should be taken with respect to the customer's behavior.

If, in the opinion of the Chief Executive Officer, any correspondence to Council contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or material clearly intended to intimidate, it will be placed on the relevant file and not otherwise acted upon.

If a staff member or volunteer feels threatened by the language or behaviour of the customer, he/she may notify the Police and as soon as possible notify their Manager.

In any instance where it can be demonstrated a customer has exhibited threatening behavior towards staff members, volunteers or members of the public the customer may be restricted or banned from use of that facility of Council. This decision will be taken by the Chief Executive Officer and communicated to the person in writing.

Managing Anonymous Customer Action Requests

Council will investigate anonymous action requests. The staff member will investigate the request as thoroughly as the information provided will allow and document the process in detail. Due to the request being anonymous the customer will not be contacted regarding the findings.

Confidentiality and Privacy

All dealings with customers must abide by Councils Privacy Policy. Access to information held by Council must be made in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

General

In all of the situations referred to in this policy, adequate documentary records must be made and maintained on the appropriate Council file.

Council collects and records data on service requests lodged and outcomes to assist in the identification of systemic and recurring problems and/ or potential improvements to service delivery and customer relations. All service requests are to be logged and the outcome recorded electronically on the Works Request System by the Works Assistant.

Where the Chief Executive Officer determines to limit a customer's access to Council in any of the ways specified in this policy, the Chief Executive Officer must advise the Council as soon as possible of the relevant circumstances and the action taken.

D. Availability

This Policy will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Loxton or Waikerie during ordinary business hours at no charge.

Copies of this Policy will also be available from Councils website: www.loxtonwaikerie.sa.gov.au or postal copies may be obtained from the Council Office to be charged at the scheduled rate according to the Fees and Charges Register.

This policy will be available in Council's Electronic Document Management System (Content Manager).

E. Document history and version control

Date	Version	Authorisation	Amendment Details
June 2008	1	Council	
17 April 2015	2	Council	
April 2017	3	Council	
19 March 2025	4	Council	Minor changes to wording to be more concise Increase Review period to 3 years Removal of facsimile as a communication option Addition of Scocial Media references