Council Policy

Council Policy Name: **Complaint Management Policy**

Responsible Directorate: **Corporate Strategy and Performance** **Version:** **Adopted**

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to outline the City of Busselton's approach to Complaints management.

2. SCOPE

2.1. This Policy applies, subject to point 2.2, to Complaints received by the City of Busselton, as defined.

2.2. This Policy does not apply to Complaints received and immediately resolved by employees during routine day-to-day interactions where the person raising the matter is satisfied with the outcome and the issue does not indicate a systemic problem or misconduct concern.

2.3. This Policy does not apply to or include Complaints dealt with under the *Local Government Act 1995* or associated regulations, specifically being:

a. Part 4 - Division 9, Electoral Process
b. Part 4 - Division 10, Validity of Elections
c. Part 4 - Division 11, Electoral Offences
d. Part 5 - Division 6, Disclosure of Financial Interests and Gifts, and
e. Part 5 - Division 9, Conduct. Please refer to the Management of Complaints of Alleged Breaches of Behaviour Council Policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to the City of Busselton about its products, services, employees or the handling of a Complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. A complaint is not: • a request for service; • a request for information; • the lodging of an appeal in accordance with a standard procedure or policy; • a freedom of information enquiry; • an allegation of a breach of the law by a third party; or • an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision.
Complainant	An individual who lodges a Complaint with City of Busselton.
Complaints Management Officer	Customer Information Coordinator and Manager Systems and Information
Policy	This policy titled 'Complaints Management'

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4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Strategic Theme	Objective
LEADERSHIP	17. Enhance the Customer experience through improved customer service, process innovation and business technologies.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

5.1. The City of Busselton is committed to the provision of quality services and regards Complaints as an opportunity for continuous improvement. The City monitors Complaints and complaint trends through review and reporting.

5.2. The Director Corporate Strategy and Performance has oversight responsibility for Complaint Management.

5.3. Complaints management within the City aligns, where relevant and appropriate, to the Ombudsman Western Australia Guidelines. Complaints will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

a. Objective and Fair: the City will review all Complaints in a fair and unbiased manner, based on facts;
b. Respect and Privacy: the City will be respectful and ethical in the management of Complaints and will, as far practicable, protect information from unauthorised access, loss or misuse;
c. Accountability: the City will be accountable for its Complaints management processes and outcomes; and
d. Responsive: the City will respond to all Complainants in a timely fashion and will regularly communicate and inform parties involved.

Types of Complaints

5.4. Complaints will be recorded as either:

A Complaint about service levels, or a lack of service	Complaints regarding the provision of a service or product.
A Complaint about conduct of employees or contractors engaged by the City	Complaints regarding employee or contractor conduct.
A Privacy Complaint	Complaints alleging a breach of privacy or misuse of personal information under the *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024*.

Lodging of Complaints

5.5. A Complaint may be lodged through any of the following channels.

a. Using the form on the 'Complaints' page on the City of Busselton website: https://www.busselton.wa.gov.au/council/customer-service/complaints.aspx.
b. In person at the City of Busselton Administration Office at 2 Southern Drive, Busselton, WA between 08:30 and 16:30 on normal business days. If preferred, an appointment can be made with a Complaints Management Officer in advance using any of the communication methods listed in this section.
c. By telephone: 08 9781 0444 between 08:30 and 16:30 on normal business days.
d. By email to complaints@busselton.wa.gov.au.
e. By post to:

City of Busselton
2 Southern Drive
Busselton
WA 6280

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5.6. Where a Complaint is made verbally, it will be recorded by the receiving employee and confirmed in writing with the Complainant.

5.7. At a minimum, the following information is required to effectively manage the Complaint:
   a. Complainant name (and organisation being represented, if relevant);
   b. Complainant contact details (address, telephone number and / or email address;
   c. Date and location of the situation causing the Complaint; and
   d. A description of the basis of the Complaint.

5.8. As part of the Complaint resolution process, the City may request additional information to investigate and substantiate a Complaint.

5.9. Complaints made to Elected Members will be provided to the CEO for processing in accordance with this Policy. They will not receive priority treatment over other Complaints.

Anonymous Complaints

5.10. Anonymous Complaints may not be investigated unless there is sufficient information to enable the City to effectively investigate or they raise a serious matter, such as an issue that poses a public health or safety risk, an emergency, or an allegation of misconduct or fraud.

5.11. The City is unable to verify information or communicate the outcome of the Complaint without knowing the full identity of the Complainant.

Complaints Management Approach

5.12. Complaints will be referred to the Complaints Management Officer for recording.

5.13. Complaints will be acknowledged no later than 5 business days from receipt by the Complaints Management Officer.

5.14. The Complaint will be directed to an appropriate Manager/s or Director/s as appropriate to resolve, or, where the Complaint is about a Director, to the CEO. Where the Complaint is about the CEO it will be referred by the Director Corporate Strategy and Performance to the CEO Performance Review Committee.

5.15. Investigations into Complaints will be conducted in accordance with natural justice principles, with due consideration given to the rights of all parties involved.

5.16. Complaints will be resolved, where possible, within 10 working days of receipt. Complainants will be advised if there will be a delay, and provided updates on the progress of the investigation at least every 10 working days.

5.17. On completion, the Complainant will be advised of the outcome in writing (this may, where appropriate, follow a phone call or face-to-face meeting). Where possible, the City will ensure the customer is satisfied before closing the Complaint in the CRM system. If the Complaint is not upheld the Complainant will be advised why.

Complaint Outcomes

5.18. When a Complaint is upheld, the City will determine if a remedy is appropriate, which may include:
   a. an explanation;
   b. an apology;
   c. mediation;
   d. a change in decision;
   e. a change to policy, procedure or practice;
   f. a correction of records;
   g. refund of a fee;
   h. the remission of a penalty;
   i. internal corrective action;
   j. referral to an external agency for further investigation.

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Where a Complainant is dissatisfied with the way in which a Complaint has been dealt with and/or the final resolution they may refer the Complaint to the CEO. The CEO will review the complaint handling process followed and determine an appropriate resolution.

5.19. In circumstances where a Complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily using internal pathways, the Complainant may choose to refer the Complaint to the Ombudsman for review. The Ombudsman can investigate Complaints about most Western Australian public authorities, including local governments.

Expectations of Complainants

5.20. To help the City meet its customer service commitments, we ask customers to:

a. respect the rights of other customers;
b. provide accurate and complete information so responses are appropriate to the enquiry; and
c. cooperate with City employees to solve problems.

5.21. The City will not tolerate behaviours such as shouting, the use of abusive or obscene language, intimidation or acting in a threatening manner towards City employees.

Vexatious, Frivolous and Malicious Complaints

5.22. While Council endeavours to respond to all Complaints, there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or rectify a real or perceived concern.

5.23. The CEO may refuse to respond to or manage a Complaint if they consider:

a. there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or rectify a real or perceived problem, and the Complainant has been advised of this previously;
b. the Complaint is trivial or frivolous;
c. the Complaint is made for the purpose of hurting another person (their career, their reputation or their livelihood);
d. resolution of the Complaint would place disproportionate and unreasonable demands on the City;
e. the Complainant is behaving in an unreasonable or abusive manner;
f. there is an unreasonable lack of cooperation from the Complainant, an unwillingness and/or inability to cooperate with the City, its employees (or agents);
g. the Complainant consistently makes Complaints of trivial and / or frivolous matters.

5.24. The City may restrict, withhold or withdraw the provision of services to unreasonable Complainants by:

a. only taking calls at specific times on specific days;
b. requiring the Complainant to make an appointment to meet with employees;
c. limiting all future dealings to writing;
d. only responding to future correspondence which provides significant new information about the Complaint or raises new issues which the City believes warrant fresh action; or
e. directing all contact to be through a specific employee or area.

5.25. Any decision made under 5.24 and supporting rationale is to be documented, with the customer advised in writing of the decision, reasons for the decision, the restrictions that apply and for what period. Any outstanding restrictions made under 5.24 are to be reviewed by the CEO on an annual basis.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTATION / LEGISLATION

6.1. City of Busselton Customer Experience Charter
6.2. Local Government Act 1995
6.3. Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act (PRIS) 2024
6.4. Ombudsman Western Australia Guidelines Complaints Management

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7. REVIEW DETAILS

Review Frequency		3-yearly		
Council Adoption	19 August 2026		Resolution #	C2608/229
Previous Adoption	21 August 2024		Resolution #	C2408/216

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