



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Procedure Name	Requests for Services Procedure
Department / Officer	Governance
Date Adopted	6 October 2015 (SMT)
Date/s Reviewed	N/A
Next Preview	Biennially or sooner to reflect current practice
Attachments	Nil

1. Purpose

The aim of this procedure is to ensure that requests for service or for service improvements are captured and addressed in a fair, consistent and structured manner which is transparent to all customers.

This procedure sets out processes for:

- Distinguishing between requests, complaints and feedback to Council
- Deciding how to respond to requests
- Using requests to directly inform service improvements

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all requests for the provision of a Council service (Works Request/Customer Service Request) or for the improvement of a service provided by Council.

This procedure does not apply to matters that fall outside of Council's jurisdiction. These types of issues will be referred to appropriate external agencies.

3. Legislation and Compliance

Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999* requires Council to maintain a procedure about "any reasonable request for the provision of a service by the Council or for the improvement of a service provided by the Council."

Such procedures must be directed towards dealing with the relevant requests in a timely, effective and fair way and using information gained from the community to improve its services and operations.

Note: For reasons outlined above staff are required to record requests/feedback that relate to new services/major works or suggestions for improvement in the Customer Service

Module, however where possible staff are encouraged to capture all requests in the Customer Service Module as this will enable Departments to generate a report on the number and type of services/operations provided.

4. Operating Procedure

4.1 Definitions

Request for Service is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service.

Complaints about the activities of third parties ie barking dogs or food premises are to be treated as *Requests for Service* in the first instance where this is a reasonable interpretation.

Feedback can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by Council without necessarily forming the basis of a complaint or a request for service. Council welcomes feedback of all types as an important way of continually monitoring its service standards.

4.1 Making an application for a Request for service

A person can make a request in a number of ways:

- Completion of the appropriate form on Council's website www.victor.sa.gov.au or at the Council office
- Telephone – (08)8551 0500
- Fax – (08) 8551 0501
- Email – localgov@victor.sa.gov.au
- Letter – PO Box 11, Victor Harbor SA 5011
- Visit to a Council Office – 1 Bay Road, Victor Harbor

4.2 When should a 'Request for Service' be treated as a complaint?

If Council has failed to meet the normal standards for a service request, or if a request is a complaint about the way in which Council has dealt with a matter concerning the activities of a third party, this will be dealt with as a complaint (refer Council's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure).

4.5 Processing requests for service

4.5.1 Receiving a Request for Service/Customer Service request

- Advise customers what action will be taken to a request at the time of lodging with reference to Council's work programs.
- Lodge the request using Council's Customer Service Module, Records database or Works Request providing the customer with a record or reference number.
- More complex requests should be forwarded to the relevant manager for determination of how to respond.
- Ensure that the referral occurs promptly and the customer understands the process and timeline for the next action.

- If a request for service is rejected Council should explain the decision clearly and offer any possible alternative actions available to the customer, including capturing the request for possible future budget/project consideration (under 4.6 below) or pursuing the matter under Council's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.
- Requests received via telephone or face to face are acknowledged at the time of customer contact and emails will be acknowledged with 5 business days.
- Council will respond to written customer requests within 15 days advising of Council's intentions in regard to the request.
- Where work is delayed customers should be informed of progress and the reasons for any delays.
- If the customer has asked to be advised when the work is completed, this task is the responsibility of the officer who finalises the request.

4.5.2 Assessment

Each request must be assessed to determine its nature, how it should be dealt with, when it should be dealt with, and who should be involved.

Experience suggests that the majority of requests can be scheduled and actioned promptly. Some will require direction from a manager, programmed for future consideration/action or, occasionally, a decision of Council.

Council will respond to requests for service by considering:

- The content of Council's strategic management plans, annual business plans, annual works program and annual budget. Does the request fit within the directions and programs which Council has agreed to, and budgeted for?
- Relevant Council policies and operating procedures. Does the request fit within other agreed positions documented by Council?
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities. Can the request be accommodated within Council's agreed operating standards?
- Using Council resources efficiently and effectively.
- An assessment of risk. Does the request relate to a matter which may impact on a public risk or Council risk eg public safety and emergencies?
- Statutory responsibilities. Is the request about a matter which Council has a statutory obligation to act upon eg Expiation of Offences Act
- The guidelines and conditions which apply to certain externally funded programs.
- The complexity of the response by Council (does it require an integrated approach from more than one department?).

4.6 Requests for new services/major works, suggestions for improvement or feedback (positive or negative)

Council is required to use customer information to improve its services and operations (Section 270 of the Local Government Act).

The following types of requests should be recorded preferably in **Council's Customer Service Module**, and linked to the relevant file number as this will enable a report to be generated for future analysis:

- Requests for new services/major works that require future budget consideration.

- Requests that relate to suggestions for improvement of services/operations.
- Feedback (positive or negative) that is considered useful to support or improve a current service, operation, policy, procedure or system.

Note: Departments may use their own systems for capturing and reporting on information required above, however, these practices must comply with the requirements of Council's Records Management Policy and include a reporting capacity.

4.6 Reporting

Managers are encouraged to take a strategic approach to feedback received from the community and, at intervals determined by the number of requests/suggestions received and business planning timeframes, to analyse information under 4.5 above in order to ensure that systemic issues are identified and addressed at the operational level and if necessary considered under the Annual Business Planning process.

4.8 Records Management

All documents, notes, telephone calls, photographs and correspondence must be retained and stored in accordance with Council's Records Management protocols as required by Section 125 of the *Local Government Act*.

In addition, all requests for service/improvements must be captured in accordance with this procedure.

5 Related Documents and References

Local Government Act 1999, Section 270
Request for Service Policy
Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
Internal Review of a Decision Procedure
Customer Service Philosophy
Records Management Policy