

Council Policy



Policy Title:	Customer Service Charter & Standards
Policy Number:	CPOL 3.03
Focus Area:	CS2 Great Support
Responsibility:	Customer Experience
Meeting Adopted:	19 April 2022 [Resolution 190422/16]

OBJECTIVE

Richmond Valley Council is committed to working in partnership with our community to consistently deliver programs and services with a strong focus on exceptional customer service reflected in our Community Strategic Plan and Organisational Values. This policy and the Customer Service Charter form the Customer Service Framework.

This policy outlines the standards Council will use to deliver professional, reliable and consistent customer service and how we will measure our performance.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of Council and will provide overall direction to staff on their responsibilities in delivering customer service and provide guidance in implementing and managing an improved customer experience.

DEFINITIONS

Customer: A customer is a person or organisation engaging in any form of interaction with Council for information, goods, services or transactions. This includes residents, property owners, business operators, consultants, Council staff, contractors, Government agency representatives, developers, Councilors, elected representatives and visitors.

Customer Service: Interactions between a customer and a provider at the time of a sale or provision of a service and thereafter. Customer service adds value to a product or service and builds an enduring relationship.

REFERENCES

Complaints Management and Mandatory Reporting Policy – CPOL.1.18
Code of Conduct
Customer Service Charter - 2021

POLICY

Our Commitment to Customer Service

Council strives to provide a positive experience to customers at every opportunity. Staff are committed to being open, honest, fair and accountable in all dealings with customers and strive to provide timely, efficient and consistent services. The Customer Service Charter outlines the standards to be used to deliver professional, reliable and consistent customer service that meets customer expectations.

We acknowledge the diversity of our community and are committed to effectively engage and communicate with our culturally diverse residents to ensure their individual needs are met. We will provide clear and logical means for customers to access services, facilities and information including assistance where necessary to lodge requests or provide feedback.

Customer Service Responsibility

All Council employees, contractors and volunteers are responsible for the provision of quality customer service to customers. Each staff member is accountable for the quality of customer service delivered through their own work or the quality of output of any project or work team(s) of which they are a member.

Leadership's Role

A key component in any customer service framework is the leadership and commitment by the General Manager and Executive Team, who are required to play an active leadership role and show commitment to the framework.

Managers and their Leadership Teams are responsible for:

- ▼ Developing a customer focused work ethic in their teams and empowering staff to undertake customer focused decision-making;
- ▼ Encouraging innovation to develop and implement customer focused systems and processes, that respond to and satisfy internal and external customer needs and expectations; and
- ▼ Ensuring all teams participate actively in implementing the plan and review the progress of the framework.

Staff will be provided with the appropriate tools, information and training to provide quality customer service.

These actions will communicate a clear message to the organisation, of the need to work together to achieve improved customer service outcomes.

Customer Service Charter

The Customer Service Charter reflects our commitment to providing quality service and outlines what a customer can expect from us. We strive to provide a friendly, professional and efficient service which meets their needs. The Charter is designed to ensure that standards are upheld.

In our commitment to customers we will act in a way that reflects and upholds our core values - Leadership, Innovation, Sustainability, Transparency, Accessibility and Good Service.

In support of the customer service framework, we commit to:

Access to timely and efficient services by:

- ▼ Outlining policies and procedures
- ▼ Preventing unnecessary return visits to council
- ▼ Doing what we say and keep customers updated, if we are unable to meet our commitments
- ▼ Publishing information on the website and social media platforms
- ▼ Referring customers to external service providers if an enquiry is outside of Councils authority.

Friendly, professional service by:

- ▼ Treating customers with respect, integrity and honesty
- ▼ Displaying empathy and understanding
- ▼ Eliminating acronyms and jargon
- ▼ Offering solutions
- ▼ Valuing personal information by maintaining confidentiality
- ▼ Listening to feedback on our service
- ▼ Set clear expectations and deliver on those commitments by development and implementation of Council wide customer service level agreements focused on accountability, performance improvements and best practice
- ▼ Actively measure and monitor our performance against the Customer Service Standards.

A fair decision-making process by:

- ▼ Complying with relevant legislation
- ▼ Ensuring staff have appropriate knowledge
- ▼ Displaying transparent decision-making processes
- ▼ Making decisions once all the information has been obtained in a timely fashion
- ▼ Notification of the outcome and reasons for the decision
- ▼ Notification of your options for an appeal.

To help us deliver a better service we ask our customers to:

- ▼ Treat our staff with courtesy and mutual respect
- ▼ Respect the privacy and rights of other customers
- ▼ Respect the community we live in
- ▼ Provide accurate and complete information and documentation
- ▼ Acknowledge Council is subject to strict governance and legislation which may result in decisions customers may not agree with
- ▼ Work with us to solve problems and reach resolutions
- ▼ Provide us with honest constructive feedback on our service.

Customer Service Standards

Council staff will provide customers with professional, polite and helpful service at every interaction and consistently apply these standards across all customer contact points.

In person

- ▼ We will greet customers with respect, courtesy and understanding
- ▼ Acknowledge customers waiting to be attended to
- ▼ Aim to answer customer's enquiry at first point of contact or put customers in contact with staff member best able to respond to their enquiry.

If we are unable to resolve the customer's issue at the first point of contact, we will:

- ▼ forward the enquiry to the appropriate staff member who will contact them with a response no later than the close of business the next working day; or
- ▼ if necessary, arrange an alternative meeting time that suits the customer.

Council Administration Offices hours of operation

- ▼ **Casino:** Monday to Friday - 9:00am to 5:00pm
- ▼ **Evans Head:** Monday to Friday - 8:30am to 4:30am
Saturday - 9:00am to 12:00noon

Enquiries made to operational staff in the field

- ▼ The safety of customers and that of our staff at the forefront of our interactions
- ▼ Council staff will endeavor to assist with the enquiry or provide details of an alternative contact person.

By Phone

- ▼ We identify ourselves as "Richmond Valley Council" and introduce ourselves by name
- ▼ Contact Centre agents strive to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds
- ▼ Average wait time will be less than 15 seconds
- ▼ Less than 5% of callers will hang up before the call is answered
- ▼ 80% calls resolved at first point of customer contact
- ▼ If we are unable to resolve the enquiry in the first instance, we will transfer or forward the enquiry to an appropriate staff member
- ▼ We will return your unanswered calls and messages by close of business the next day
- ▼ Council will provide a 24-hour phone service for urgent after-hours requests.

Correspondence including emails

- ▼ General enquiries sent to Customer Experience, will be answered within five (5) business days
- ▼ Enquiries to other departments will be answered within twenty-one (21) calendar days
- ▼ If your correspondence cannot meet the above standards, an acknowledgment letter will be sent advising of the reason/s and provide ongoing updates until resolution
- ▼ We will respond in language that is clear, concise and easily understood, eliminating jargon and acronyms
- ▼ We will respond to correspondence using appropriate means and ensure that accurate records are securely maintained.

Social Media / Website

- ▼ Social media allows Council to share accurate and timely information directly with our community. Council cannot guarantee a response to all posts made on its social media sites and therefore will post responses when considered necessary or appropriate.
- ▼ Enquiries made via Council's website or Facebook Messenger will be acknowledged as being received via an automated response and processed in line with the written correspondence standards listed above.
- ▼ We will continuously review our website to ensure it is easy to navigate and displays current and accurate content.

Customer Request Management

Council maintains a Customer Request Management (CRM) System to record, monitor and report on requests received. This service enables customers to notify us of an issue, request an action, report faults, defects or hazards in Council infrastructure. Requests can be lodged over the phone, in writing or on Council's website.

We strive to ensure:

- ▼ Customer requests will be actioned within 80% of set timeframes.
- ▼ Customer requests will be monitored by each relevant supervisor/manager to ensure these timeframes are being met.
- ▼ Reporting to relevant stakeholders is actioned on a monthly basis.

Customer Satisfaction

Council is committed to being accessible and responsive to customers. We welcome compliments, suggestions and complaints.

We value customer feedback and use it as an opportunity to learn and improve our service delivery, practices, procedures, products, systems and complaints. It confirms that the service we are providing is a service that the customer values and helps us to recognise staff for excellent customer service delivery.

We are committed to ensuring complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively. We have a formal Complaints Handling Policy which outlines standards and processes for actioning matters raised by Customers quickly and managed effectively.

Complaints Management and Mandatory Reporting Policy – CPOL.1.18

Continuous Improvement Plan

The continuous improvement plan to be undertaken by the Customer Experience Manager on an annual basis:

- ▼ Service Level Agreements review – meetings to be held with relevant stakeholders to review the current agreements and changes to be made if required.
- ▼ Contact Centre review to ensure the framework and support tools are supporting of providing excellent customer service both internally and to the wider community.
- ▼ Customer Service workflows are reviewed to ensure productivity goals are being met and they assist in meeting service standards.
- ▼ Customer Request timeframes are reviewed to ensure that relevant timeframes are measured against requests.

Training

- ▼ Office based staff are provided with a customer service induction within the first month of commencement of their employment. The aim of the induction process is to make staff aware of the customer service standards whilst undertaking their responsibilities of their role.

Reporting

Customer Service

- ▼ Reporting on our Customer Service standards will be done on a quarterly basis to Council with areas for improvement identified and necessary strategies implemented. A customer service survey will be completed every six months and reported to Council.

Development Concierge

- ▼ Reporting on the number and type of development enquiries and lodged applications that have received assistance from the Development Concierge will be reported on a quarterly basis to Council. A development application survey will be completed every six months and reported to Council.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by Council at the time of any relevant legislative changes, compliance requirements or at least every four years.

Version Number	Date	Reason / Comments
1	19 April 2022	New policy – previously known as Customer Service Framework and Charter