



# Compliments, Complaints and Requests for Service Procedure

Name of Procedure:	Compliments, Complaints and Requests for Service Procedure
Purpose of Procedure:	Encourage feedback from customers to improve services and recognise excellence in service
Procedure Applies to:	All employees
Approved by:	Executive Team
Responsible for its Updating	Customer Services Team / Executive Team
Final Approval by:	Executive Team
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose

Kaikoura District Council is committed to the delivery of quality services outlined in the Long-Term Plan and Annual Plan. We welcome feedback from customers as this provides opportunities for learning and improving our services, in addition to recognising excellence in service.

This procedure will be made available to the public through Kaikoura District Council's website. Staff will have access to this procedure via the intranet.

## 1.2 Scope

Our Community is encouraged to:

- Provide feedback, compliments, suggestions or complaints
- Make a request for service to resolve an issue.

Council staff will resolve complaints in a fair, timely and confidential manner in order to achieve positive outcomes for both the customer and staff.

# 2. DEFINITIONS

## 2.1 Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is defined as follows:

*"An expression of dissatisfaction about the Council service or action of a staff member that cannot be resolved at the first point of contact."*

Examples include:

- Taking too long to action or failing to action a request
- Failure to follow the procedure or rules
- Giving wrong or misleading information
- A member of staff failing to deliver on a commitment made.

Every effort will be made to resolve issues as quickly as possible at the first point of contact.

## 2.2 Definition of a Request for Service – Customer Services Request (CSR)

Customers can lodge a request for service via Kaikoura District Council's website or by phoning reception on 03 319 5026. Requests for service involves Council infrastructure or assets. These may be a request to perform a service, such as infrastructure or facilities maintenance.

A request for service does not include applications for resource consents, building consents, advertising sign consents, liquor licenses or other such applications made to Council by private parties. For further information in relation to these applications, please call reception on 03 319 5026.

A request for service may include but are not limited to:

- Maintenance or repair of Council's roads and footpaths, including streetlights and traffic signs
- Maintenance or repair Councils potable water, stormwater, and effluent systems
- Clean up graffiti on Council assets
- Maintenance of Council's public spaces such as bathrooms, parks and boating facilities
- Removal of litter

- Request for improvements to council services such as new streetlights or signs
- Emergency repair of Council assets
- Public safety or any Health and safety concerns.

### **3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROCEDURE**

It is intended that most issues will be dealt with under this procedure, though there may be exceptions that arise as a result of other processes of review or statute. Possible examples:

- Complaints that are criticisms or disagreement with Council policy or decisions
- Complaints that constitute a disagreement with or refusal to accept matters that the Council is obliged or required by statute to apply
- A complaint where the customer or the Council has started legal proceedings or has taken court action
- A complaint that has already been heard by a court or tribunal
- Insurance claims
- Any other complaint where an alternative formal process has been commenced
- Where another formal complaint process exists
- Where a formal right of appeal already exists.

The management of such complaints will fall outside this procedure, with each situation appropriately managed given the particular circumstance.

### **4. PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT**

#### **4.1 Making a Complaint**

A customer (or their representative) can make a complaint in person, by visiting the Customer Service desk at the Council, during normal business hours, or by telephone, letter, email or via our website.

Customers should provide name and contact details to allow a response. If customer details are not provided, Council cannot provide a response.

Any complaints regarding the Building Control Authority Function or the conduct of staff must be lodged in writing.

Supporting Evidence Requirement: Customers are required to provide detailed supporting evidence to substantiate their claims before a complaint can be acted on.

#### **4.2 Responding to Complaints**

Complaints will be responded to as quickly as possible by the most appropriate method. Where a response or resolution is made by telephone, written records will be kept. This will cover:

- Details of the investigation
- The outcome (e.g. whether the complaint is upheld, action taken, apology, or reason why the Council is unable to assist)
- Information on the right of further redress and escalation if the customer remains dissatisfied.
- These details will be provided to the complainant on request.

#### **4.3 Extending Complaint response times**

Complaints of a more complex nature may take longer to investigate than the specified time limits. Where this is the case, the customer will be informed of the reason(s) why and when they can expect to receive a full response.

#### **4.4 Complaints against an individual staff member**

The Council is committed to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and impartially. If a complaint is received about a staff member, these complaints must be in writing.

The appropriate Manager will be notified and will be responsible for the management and resolution of the issue. (Please note: if this type of complaint is not in writing, it will not be actioned).

Managers, supported by Human Resources (where appropriate) are strongly encouraged, where practicable, to meet face to face with the complainant to seek fair and equitable resolution.

#### **4.5 Complaints against the Chief Executive**

Any complaint against the Chief Executive will be referred to the Mayor, who will determine the most appropriate means of investigation and resolution. The procedures and timescales for any such complaint may fall outside the normal standard, and should this be the case, this would be formally advised to the complainant. (Please note: if this type of complaint is not in writing, it will not be actioned).

#### **4.6 Complaints against Elected Members**

Elected Members must comply with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. This Code describes the high standards of conduct required from Councillors in carrying out their duties. Complaints regarding the conduct of a Councillor should be referred to the Mayor, who will manage such complaints in conjunction with the Chief Executive, in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Code of Conduct.

#### **4.7 Anonymous complaints**

Complaints made anonymously will be given consideration and dealt with as appropriate depending on the information given. This includes any issues that may be laid anonymously under the "whistle-blower" legislation. Where no contact details are provided, no response on the outcome of the investigation will be provided.

#### **4.8 Unacceptable actions by complainants**

Customers may behave out of character in times of distress. There may be circumstances leading up to a complaint. The Council does not accept that forceful or determined behaviour is appropriate behaviour towards staff. The Council will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards staff, verbal or otherwise.

A complainant's behaviour may be deemed to be unacceptable if, for example:

- They are abusive to Council staff
- They persistently make the same complaint, despite it having been fully investigated under this procedure, or persist in seeking an unrealistic outcome
- They repeatedly change aspects of the complaint or the desired outcome part way through an investigation.

When handling a complaint consider that the complainant's behaviour is unacceptable, they should advise the complainant of this fact and their reasons for that evaluation, and that the investigation process will be suspended. The investigation will recommence on receipt of an undertaking from the complainant that they will suitably modify their behaviour.

Should a complainant disagree with the suspension, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to either a Team Manager or the Chief Executive.

The Manager may refuse to investigate a complaint if he/she considers that the complaint is frivolous, habitual, or vexatious. If the Investigating Officer is considering refusing to investigate on these grounds, they must consult with the appropriate Team Manager before making this decision. If the decision is that the complaint will not be investigated on any of these grounds, the Manager must confirm this to the complainant in writing. If the complainant disagrees with this decision, they retain their right to escalate their complaint to the Chief Executive.

## **5. COUNCIL STAFF MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS**

As indicated above, all complaints will be investigated (and if need be prioritised) and dealt with in confidence, consistent with the needs of the investigation. To enable this procedure to be adequately reviewed and revised, monitoring of our compliance with this procedure will be undertaken.

## **6. COMPLIMENTS**

When a staff member receives a compliment, it is shared with the team leader, who then shares it with the Executive Team.

Information provided will be used to produce management information to monitor performance, highlight areas of failure and feed into the process to identify areas for service improvement. The information will be reported to Council's Executive Team on a monthly basis.

## **6. REVIEW**

This procedure will be reviewed every five years.