



City of
Norwood
Payneham
& St Peters

NAME OF POLICY: Requests for Services Policy and Procedure

POLICY MANUAL: Governance

INTRODUCTION

Local Government delivers an extensive range of services and infrastructure to communities, and discharges obligations associated with many pieces of legislation. Providing services to the community is a key component of the Council's operations and requests for work to be undertaken or a service provided are a daily occurrence.

The Council is committed to the provision of quality service to customers and aims to provide services fairly and efficiently. It also monitors requests to identify ways in which it can proactively improve its services or the way in which its services are provided.

Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act), requires the Council to develop and maintain a policy about "*any reasonable request for the provision of a service by the Council or for the improvement of a service provided by the Council.*"

This Policy and Procedure aims to:

- provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable request for a service or an improvement to a service;
- distinguish between requests, complaints and comments to the Council and give direction on the management of requests; and
- establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests which are received including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements.

DEFINITIONS

Business Day means a day when the Council is normally open for business, i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

Council refers to the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters

Employee includes a person employed directly by the Council in a full time, part time or casual capacity (whether that position is permanent or contractual) and persons providing services to, or on behalf of, the Council even though they may be employed by another party.

PRINCIPLES

This Policy and Procedure is based on the following principles, which are fundamental to the way the Council approaches requests for services:

- **Fairness:** treating citizens fairly requires impartiality, confidentiality and transparency at all stages of the process;

- *Accessibility*: to be accessible there must be broad public awareness about Council's policy and a range of contact options;
- *Responsiveness*: this will be achieved by providing sufficient resources, well trained staff and review and improvement of the systems;
- *Efficiency*: customer requests will be dealt with as quickly as practical while adhering to this policy; and
- *Integration* of different areas of Council where the customer request overlaps functional responsibilities.

In processing requests for service emphasis will be placed on:

- public safety and emergencies;
- fulfilling Council's strategic and business plans;
- using Council resources effectively; and
- referring to guidelines and conditions of externally funded programs (eg. Home and Community Care).

3 What is a Request for Service?

A **Request for Service** is an application to have the Council or its representative, take some form of action to provide a new service or improve a service which is already provided by the Council.

A **Complaint** is an expression of dis-satisfaction with a service which has, or should have, been received. The Council's *Complaints Handling Policy* defines a complaint as:

"an expression of dissatisfaction with the Council's policies, procedures, charges, staff, agents, quality of service, programs and facilities. A complaint may relate to a specific incident or an issue involving the Council, or to matters of a more philosophical or general nature regarding the Council's processes and/or procedures".

Where the Council has failed to meet the normal standards for a service which has been, or should have been, delivered, the Council's *Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure* may apply. Where ambiguity exists, the Council will deal with a matter as a request for service, rather than a complaint, in the first instance.

Comments either positive or negative, about services provided by the Council may not necessarily require a corrective action, change of services or formal review of a decision. Comments may, however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods.

Requests for service will be assessed in the context of the services and work provided for in the Council's Annual Business Plan and Budget and according to the conditions of externally funded programs.

4. Reasonable Requests for Service

In determining how to respond to a request for service, the Council will consider:

- an assessment of risks;
- statutory responsibilities;
- the content of Council's Strategic Management Plan, *City Plan 2030*, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget;
- relevant Council policies and codes; and
- established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

5. Processing a Request for Service

In the Council's experience, most requests fit within well established guidelines which will be explained to an applicant at the outset. The Council aims to manage requests efficiently and effectively. Employees are provided with a level of authority to advise applicants of the likely timeframe to complete the action required.

Where further evaluation is necessary before committing the Council to undertake the work the applicant will be informed accordingly. If a request cannot be fulfilled in a reasonable timeframe the applicant will be advised, including an explanation of why this decision was taken.

Where an applicant is not satisfied with the Council's decision, it is open to the applicant to lodge a complaint against the decision in accordance with the Council's *Complaints Handling Policy*.

6. Timeframes for Response

The circumstances of individual requests for service will vary greatly. In the majority of cases requests will be processed promptly and the applicant advised verbally or in writing by post or via email.

Routine requests are often subject to service response standards. For example, uncollected rubbish bins will be collected within 48 hours and the assessment of public safety concerns will occur, where practicable, on the same day as the request is received. Other requests may be best suited to scheduling to coincide with work in a particular suburb or season. Examples of this include pruning of street trees and attention to minor stormwater drainage problems. Requests which involve undertaking major works or the provision of new services will be referred to the Council for consideration as part of the annual budget process.

Council staff will respond within seven (7) business days advising of the Council's intentions in regard to requests.

7. Recording Requests for Service

A person can make an application for a service in a number of ways, namely:

- completion of the report a problem form on the Council's website;
- telephone;
- email;
- letter;
- petition to Council; and/or
- in person at a Council facility (ie, Norwood Town Hall, Glynde Depot, one of the Council's three Libraries), or at any facility owned and operated by the Council.

All requests will be recorded in the Council's Corporate Records Management system and / or Customer Request Management System (CRMS), in such a way that the information can also be analysed for service improvement opportunities.

8. Requests which are Not Approved

All requests for services which are not approved will be recorded and may be re-considered at a future date, (for example in conjunction with the preparation of the Council's Annual Business Plan and associated budget). The Council will receive a report on the number and nature of requests, including the percentage of requests which are not approved, at least annually.

REQUESTS FOR SERVICES PROCEDURE

The Council welcomes requests for service as a way of improving its services and programs, as well as fulfilling the needs of its community.

This Procedure sets out the processes which will be followed when a request for a service is received to ensure that all such requests are addressed in a fair, consistent and structured process which is transparent to all applicants.

1. Assisting with the lodgement requests for service

No one should be excluded from lodging a request for service because of any difficulties which they may have representing themselves. All staff are expected to offer assistance where appropriate and provide assistance on request, including assistance in documenting the request in writing when circumstances warrant such assistance to be provided.

2. Recording requests for service

The details of requests for services are to be recorded in the Council's Customer Request Management System, including the following information:

- date and time of the request;
- the name of the staff member recording the request;
- the name and address of the person making the request (where applicable);
- the contact phone numbers and email address of the person making the request (where applicable);
- comprehensive information about the nature of the request;
- the staff member the request has been assigned to; and
- if the person who made the request wishes to be advised when the work is completed.

3. Responding to requests for service

Each request must be assessed to determine the nature of the request, how the request 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 requests however, will require direction from a General Manager or Manager or, in some instances depending on the nature of the request, it may be required to be referred to the Council for consideration.

Prior to consideration of the response to the request it is also important to consider the following:

- public safety and emergencies (the need and requirement of immediate action);
- using Council resources efficiently and effectively;
- the guidelines and conditions which apply to certain externally funded programs (eg Home and Community Care); and
- the complexity of the request and subsequent response by the Council (ie does it require an integrated approach from more than one department?).

Where possible, an applicant will be advised as to what action will be taken in response to requests at the time of lodging the request.

More complex requests should be forwarded to the relevant General Manager or Manager for determination in respect to the response. Referral of the request must occur promptly Ensure that the referral occurs promptly and the customer understands the process and timeline for the next action.

Where requests relate to undertaking major work or the provision of new services these may need to be considered by the Council as part of the Council's annual Budget process.

4. Acknowledging requests for service and progress

The Council aims to respond to requests as soon as possible, and at least within five (5) business days, wherever possible advising of the Council's intentions regarding the request.

If a request is not approved, the decision is to be explained clearly and any possible alternative actions available to the person who made the request identified.

Where work or auctioning work is delayed, the person who made the request must be informed of progress and the reasons for any delays.

If the person who made the request has asked to be advised when the work is completed, this task is the responsibility of the employee who is handling the request.

5. Service Improvement

Learning from requests for a service/s is a way for the Council to ascertain how to improve its processes and procedures.

The Council has systems to:

- record, analyse and report on the types of requests for service it receives; and
- apply the information to improve level of service it provides to citizens.

Understanding the number and type of requests initiated by citizens may indicate that changes to policies, procedures or systems to improve service delivery are required.

All requests for services, including those which are not approved, must be recorded in the Council's Records Management System / Customer Request Management System (CRM), in such a way that the information can also be analysed for the purposes of identifying opportunities for improvement.

At intervals determined by the number of requests received, the data on requests for services will be reported to Executive Leadership Team to ensure that systemic issues are identified and addressed.

The Council is provided with reports containing data about requests for service, actions taken to address them and changes made as a result at least once each calendar year.

REVIEW PROCESS

In order to ensure that the Council continues to provide the best possible services for its citizens, this Policy and Procedure will be subject to periodic evaluation and review.

INFORMATION

The contact officer for further information at the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters is the Council's General Manager, Governance & Civic Affairs, telephone 8366 4549.

ADOPTION OF THE PROCEDURE

This Policy and Procedure was adopted by Council on 3 August 2020.

This Policy and Procedure was reviewed and adopted by the Council on 5 February 2024.

TO BE REVIEWED

February 2027