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1. Statement

Ipswich City Council is strongly committed to excellence, continuous improvement and best practice across all aspects of customer contact. Council seeks to make a positive difference in the lives of its customers by providing quality services and programs that are consistent, efficient and effective, and delivered in ways that respect and uphold the rights of all residents and visitors.

2. Purpose and Principles

This policy:

- Recognises the importance of council's customers and their right to be treated as individuals - with respect, courtesy and fairness
- Informs and guides council officers' approach to customer contact, with a clear focus on customer centric service delivery
- Ensures equitable access for people with specific needs
- Establishes the requirement for reportable service levels for consistent customer contact across all channels
- Outlines council's commitment to improve customer access to routine, publicly available information and services on-line
- Informs council's Customer Relationship Management system which facilitates appropriate record-keeping, and enables access to all relevant information necessary to provide best practice customer service.

3. Strategic Plan Links

This policy aligns with the following iFuture 2021-2026 Corporate Plan theme/s:

- Safe, Inclusive and Creative
- A Trusted and Leading Organisation

4. Regulatory Authority

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- *Queensland Disability Service Act 2006*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy

5. Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

6. Scope

This policy deals with customer contact involving the interaction between council and its customers, including enquiries, complaints, submission of forms and bill payments via the key channels of:

- Face-to-face visit to a council customer service counter, other service location such as a library, or in the field such as compliance or animal management
- Telephone or SMS either to a specific phone number or extension or through council’s Customer Call Centre
- By internet or email
- By correspondence via mail or facsimile

Ipswich City Council commits to provide its customers with:

- **Prompt and efficient service**
 - Defined service standards for common service situations
 - Do what we say we will do and update if we are unable to meet our commitments
 - Respond to individual needs and provide customers with the information they require
 - Ensure systems are in place to protect confidential information
- **Easy access to Council services**
 - Effective use of self-serve technology for routine applications and payments
 - Customer Service counters open during office hours
 - Access online services any time
 - Council’s website is easy to use, with clear navigation and content
 - After hours service is available for urgent or emergency requests
 - Widely publicise information on how to make contact with council and obtain information
- **Friendly, professional, well-trained staff**
 - Greet customers in a friendly and respectful manner
 - Treat every customer equally and sensitively
 - Provide competent and experienced staff
 - Take responsibility in answering customer queries and focus on finding solutions to their needs
 - All customer contact is treated with confidentiality and privacy is appropriately preserved

- Promote and invest in safe workplaces and training where staff can achieve high levels of service outcomes for customers
- **Accurate and consistent information**
 - Being open and transparent about council's processes
 - Provide consistent and clear information across all of council's communication channels
 - Communicate clearly and in plain language
 - Keep appropriate records of customer interactions for informative decision-making

Council will:

- **Actively pursue continuous improvement**
 - Regularly monitor performance to ensure provision of quality service
 - Integrate customer feedback into business improvement processes
 - Work to improve on-line services for routine contact services such as bill payment, lodgement of forms and lodging of service requests
 - Regularly review and update information available to customers on council's website and publications
 - Value and invest in the professional development of customer service staff
- **Consult with the community when developing new products and services**
 - Ask for and consider input when developing new products and services
 - Seek feedback on service delivery
 - Honestly listen to and respond to feedback provided
- **Make fair and transparent decisions**
 - Comply with all relevant legislation
 - Make decisions quickly, once all relevant information received and evaluated
 - Notify customers promptly of the outcomes of decisions and actions
 - Outline options for appeal and for providing council with feedback when customers are unhappy with the outcomes
- **Acknowledge and address any mistakes made by Council**
 - Listen carefully to customer's needs and clarify
 - Apologise where council has made mistakes or caused delays
 - Act to fix the problems and mistakes quickly, where possible
 - Follow up after a mistake to identify process improvements

Council recognises that quality services can only be achieved in partnership with our customers.

Staff can reasonably expect that customers will:

- Treat staff with respect and courtesy
- Be open and honest in their dealings with council
- Provide council with information that is timely, accurate and complete
- Work with council to solve problems and reach resolutions
- Respect the rights of other customers
- Provide council with honest, constructive feedback so we can deliver better services

- Contact council if they believe that council has made an error or acted inappropriately
- Council is committed to being accessible and responsive to all customers who seek assistance with a request for service, request for information or with a complaint.

At the same time, the success of the organisation depends on:

- Council's ability to undertake work and perform functions in the most effective and efficient ways possible
- The health, safety and security of council's staff
- Council's ability to allocate resources fairly across all the complaints received

Complaints

Where customers are dissatisfied with the standard of service, action or decision of council or its staff, a complaint may be lodged via council's website, in writing, by telephone, or in person. Council is committed to recognising the importance and value of listening and responding to complaints.

Legitimate complaints are welcomed and will be dealt with according to council's Complaints Management Framework.

Council will do its best to resolve complaints in a timely manner, and will keep customers informed of the progress of the complaint.

Managing Unreasonable Demands or Conduct by Customers

Most customers act reasonably and responsibly in their interactions with council. A small number of customers behave in ways that are unreasonable, inappropriate or unacceptable, in spite of council's best efforts to assist them.

When customers behave unreasonably, Ipswich City Council will take proactive and decisive action to address the behaviours.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all councillors, council staff, contractors, and others that act on council's behalf to ensure they work in accordance with the policy principles and in accordance with the relevant legislation.

8. Key Stakeholders

- Community, Cultural and Economic Development
 - All Branch and Section Managers
 - Relevant staff – Libraries
 - Relevant staff – Customer Service Centre
- Corporate Services
 - Legal and Governance
 - Complaints Management Unit
- Executive Leadership Team

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Broad staff understanding and adoption of policy

- Reduction in complaints about the standard of Council customer service

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
Council	Means Ipswich City Council.
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, the quality or timeliness of a service provided, or the behaviour of employees, contractors or volunteers. A concern/ complaint may relate to a specific incident or issue involving council, or to matters of a more philosophical or general nature regarding council's processes or procedures.
Customer	Refers to a purchaser or user of products or services of council. This may include external customers such as ratepayers, residents, organisations, constituents, stake holders, businesses, government agencies, contractors, consultants, and internal customers – Councillors and other staff members.
Customer Service	The identifiable, but sometimes intangible, series of activities undertaken by council designed to provide a product or function and enhance the level of customer satisfaction.

11. Policy Owner

The General Manager (Community, Cultural and Economic Development Department) is the policy owner and the Manager (Libraries and Customer Services) is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.