



Brighton Council

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

Brighton Council is committed to the provision of timely, efficient, consistent and quality services provided by polite and helpful Council Officers, who meet our customers' expectations.

Who is a Customer?

A customer is any person or organisation seeking services or information from Brighton Council.

Our Customer Service Commitment

On a personal level we will:

- Treat customers courteously and with respect.
- Deal with you in a polite and helpful manner.
- Listen to you and take your views into account.
- Treat you fairly and take account of your particular needs.
- Provide you with appropriate information.
- Explain what customers need to do.
- Be punctual for meetings and appointments.
- Constantly look for ways in which our service can be improved.
- Follow through with any commitment we make; and
- Value customers privacy by treating personal information confidentially.

For enquiries we will:

- Attend the counter, answer the telephone promptly and courteously and assist with an enquiry directly without unnecessary referrals or transfers.
- If we cannot deal with your enquiry then we will give you the name of the person it will be referred to.
- Acknowledge receipt of your correspondence.

What is a Customer Request, Enquiry or Complaint?

It is important to make the distinction between a customer request, complaint and enquiry.

A request is:

- an appeal for assistance to inspect, remove, replace, repair or reinstate Council activities or amenities which may be damaged or missing as a result of a number of circumstances i.e. repair to street sign, pot hole in the road that needs repair or missed waste collection.

An enquiry is:

- an appeal for information. An answer to be provided to a specific question or a decision to be made in relation to a specific matter. e.g. zoning of a particular parcel of land in municipality.
- In some instances, due to the Privacy Act and Policy, personal information will not be given out i.e. ratepayer details. Refer Council's Privacy Policy.

A Customer Complaint is:

- an expression of dissatisfaction with a level or quality of service or product offered or provided, or an appeal for action to be taken in respect of a nuisance.

Customer Service

Brighton Council places great emphasis on the prompt and efficient handling of requests and enquiries.

What we expect of our customers

Help us to help you by:

- treating our staff with courtesy and respect;
- respecting the privacy and rights of other customers and staff;
- being honest with us and providing us with all relevant information at the time of the initial contact;
- making an appointment where your enquiry is of a complex nature or when you need to meet with a specific officer.

Requests and Enquiries

All written correspondence to Council should be marked to the attention of the General Manager. We will acknowledge receipt of all written requests, enquiries or complaints within five (5) working days.

We will respond to your written correspondence within fifteen (15) working days. If your request is more complex and requires greater attention, we will contact you and explain the reason for any delay. If prolonged investigations are needed, we will keep you informed on the progress.

Complaints***Where do I make my complaint?***

Each Department of Council is responsible for the handling of its own complaints.

Complaints in relation to services provide by Council may be made in the following manner:-

- by telephone – (03) 6268 7000;
- in person at the Council Offices, Old Beach;
- in writing to the General Manager, 1 Tivoli Road, Old Beach; or
- by email to admin@brighton.tas.gov.au

Your complaint will then be directed to the appropriate Department for investigation and response.

We normally require a complainant to provide their name, address and telephone contact details however we may accept anonymous complaints at our discretion if there is a potential

risk to persons or property. In all circumstances we require sufficient details for the complaint to be investigated.

What is not a complaint?

- A request for service (unless there was no response to a first request for service).
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure.
- A complaint for which a statutory review process exists, such as an appeal against a planning decision which is dealt with under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.
- Disagreement with a policy, decision or direction of the Council.
- An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a Councillor (refer Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors Policy).
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure.
- Reports of nuisances, dogs, neighbours, noise, unauthorised building work or similar issues.
- A complaint against a staff member (dealt with by Human Resources).

While many people think of at least some of the matters above as “complaints”, to us they are “requests” that are a major part of what we do every day. Requests are mentioned within this Charter.

Complaints Management Process

The Manager of each Department of the Council is responsible for handling complaints relevant to that Department.

While most situations can usually be resolved at an early stage, there are times when they require detailed investigation. If a complaint is of a very serious nature, it will be referred to the General Manager.

Irrespective of the manner in which the complaint was received, a response to the complaint can be expected within twenty (20) working days. When this is not possible e.g. your complaint is complex and requires extensive investigation, in this instance you will be kept informed on the progress on the matter.

Personal Information - Privacy

Customers can expect their privacy to be respected and personal information treated confidentially throughout the complaint management process.

What if I am not satisfied with the response to a complaint?

Experience has shown that the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily resolved, however if you are not satisfied with the outcome you may ask for a review of your complaint by the General Manager, who will reinvestigate your complaint and inform you of the findings.

Abusive Customers

No Council employee is required to accept threatening, abusive or insulting conduct from customers.

For any interaction with members of the community where personal abuse or vulgar language is used, the communication may be terminated immediately by the Officer. If face to face, the Officer may walk away. If on a telephone, the Council Officer will terminate the call. If in email, the address may be blocked.

Habitual and Vexatious Complaints

Habitual or vexatious complaints are defined as:

- repetitive and burdensome complaints that have been considered resolved or responded to in previous communication with the complainant;
- unreasonable complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes;
- placing unreasonable demands on Council where resources are substantially and unreasonably diverted away from its other core functions and priorities.

Whilst Council endeavours to respond to the needs of all complainants, there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem. Where complaints continue and have been identified as habitual or vexatious, the General Manager, in discussion with the Senior Management Team, will seek agreement to treat the complainant as a habitual or vexatious complainant.

In such cases, the General Manager will write to the complainant to inform them of the determination and consider their response, should they provide one. If the determination remains, no further action will be taken on these complaints.

If a customer wishes to dispute this determination they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman.

What to do if I am still not satisfied?

The Ombudsman may review actions and decisions taken by Council. While you are entitled to refer your complaint directly to the Ombudsman at any time, we would encourage you to allow Council to investigate your complaint first.

Complaints of Non-Compliance or Offence

A customer may make a complaint to the Director of Local Government that a Council, Councillor or General Manager has failed to comply with the *Local Government Act 1993*, or any other Act, or they may have committed an offence under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Such complaints must be made in writing; identify the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made; give particulars of the grounds of the complaint; be verified by statutory declaration; and be lodged with the Director. Complaints should be sent to Director of Local Government, Local Government Office, Department of Premier & Cabinet, GPO Box 123, Hobart.

Reporting of Complaints

In accordance with Section 339F of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the General Manager will provide a report to the Council annually on the number and nature of complaints received.

The Council will review this Charter within twelve (12) months of an election and every two years after that.

Personal Information Protection

Council has a commitment to protect Personal Information provided by a customer to Council in accordance with the requirements of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Right to Information Act 2009*. Council's Privacy Policy is available for inspection at the Council Offices and on Council's website.

**If we can improve our level of service to you, please contact
our Customer Service Officers on (03) 6268 7000**