

REQUESTS FOR SERVICE POLICY	
Type	Governance
Category	Corporate & Community
Responsible Officer	Director Corporate & Community
First Issued / Adopted	22 April 2015
Review Period	3 years
Last Reviewed	22 January 2020, 25 January 2017
Minutes Reference	OM14/20, OM15/17
Next Review Date	November 2022
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act 1999 s 270
Related Documents	Community Engagement Policy Complaints Policy Complaints Handling Procedure
Public Consultation Required	Yes
File Reference	9.63.1.4

1. PURPOSE

To establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements.

This policy 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 feedback to Council and give direction on management of requests;
- establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements.

Document No	Version No	Last review	Next review	Page
POL-0009	1.0	22 January 2020	November 2022	Page 1 of 5

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2. SCOPE

This policy applies in relation to all requests for service throughout the council.

3. DEFINITIONS

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

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by the Council or its representatives that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected. This includes complaints about a service that has been, or should have been delivered.

Council refers to the Port Pirie Regional Council.

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.

Request for Service is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

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

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.

Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999* requires 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."

Document No	Version No	Last review	Next review	Page
POL-0009	1.0	22 January 2020	November 2022	Page 2 of 5

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4. POLICY STATEMENT (Cont'd)

4.1 Principles Underlying the Policy

This policy is based on five principles, which will be fundamental in the way Council approaches requests for service. They are:

- **Fairness:** treating customers 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;
- **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;
- Guidelines and conditions of externally funded programs.

Where Council has failed to meet the normal standards for a service which has been, or should have been, delivered the Complaints Policy and the associated procedures apply. Where ambiguity exists, Council will deal with a matter as a request for service, rather than a complaint, in the first instance.

Feedback can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by Council without necessarily requiring a corrective action, change of services or formal review of a decision. Feedback 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.

Document No	Version No	Last review	Next review	Page
POL-0009	1.0	22 January 2020	November 2022	Page 3 of 5

4. POLICY STATEMENT (Cont'd)

4.2 Reasonable Request for Service

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

- An assessment of risk;
- Statutory responsibilities;
- The content of Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget;
- Relevant Council policies and codes;
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

4.3 Processing a Request for Service

In Council's experience, most requests fit within well established guidelines which will be explained to an applicant at the outset. 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 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 under Council's Complaints Policy.

5. 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 by return post/email.

Routine requests are often subject to service response standards. For example, 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 tree pruning on Council streets and attention to minor drainage problems. Requests for major works or new services will be referred to Council for consideration as part of the next annual cycle of review and public consultation.

Council staff will acknowledge within ten (10) business days advising of Council's intentions in regard to the request. If a resolution is not possible at that time, the applicant will be kept regularly informed of progress, either by email, letter or personal contact.

Document No	Version No	Last review	Next review	Page
POL-0009	1.0	22 January 2020	November 2022	Page 4 of 5

6. RECORDING REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

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

- Completion of the appropriate form on Council's website;
- My Local Services App;
- Telephone;
- Email;
- Letter;
- Petition to Council;
- Visit a Council customer service office.

All requests will be recorded in Council's records management system in such a way that the information can also be analysed for service improvement opportunities.

6.1 Rejected Requests

All rejected requests will be recorded and may be reconsidered at a future date, such as in conjunction with the preparation of an Annual Business Plan and associated budget. Council will receive a report on the number and nature of requests, including the percentage of rejected requests, at least twice a year.

6.2 Actioned and Programmed Requests

All material requests that are actioned or programmed will be recorded and reported to Council.

7. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

In order to ensure Council continues to provide the best possible service responses to its customers, this policy will be subject to periodic evaluation and review.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

This policy will be available for inspection at the Council offices listed below during ordinary business hours and available to be downloaded, free of charge, from Council's internet site: www.pirie.sa.gov.au

- Port Pirie Council Administration Centre, 115 Ellen Street, Port Pirie
- Crystal Brook Rural Office, Bowman Street, Crystal Brook

Copies will be provided to interested parties upon request, and upon payment of a fee in accordance with Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.

Document No	Version No	Last review	Next review	Page
POL-0009	1.0	22 January 2020	November 2022	Page 5 of 5