

SOUTHERN  
MIDLANDS  
COUNCIL



# Customer Service Charter

S.339F *Local Government Act 1993*

March 2023

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## 1. PURPOSE

This Customer Service Charter specifies the Southern Midlands Council's customer service commitment and principles relating to the services it provides.

## 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Honesty and Integrity

- (a) We will treat you with respect and be courteous at all times;
- (b) We will be honest and transparent in all dealings with you; and
- (c) We will be consistent and impartial in administering our statutory and regulatory functions.

### 2.2 Professionalism

- (a) We will always be polite, listen to your enquiry and respond in a professional manner;
- (b) We will endeavour to correct things promptly when they have gone wrong;
- (c) We will provide you with straightforward information and try to provide you with an alternative avenue if we are unable to help with your request;
- (d) We will respond to all enquiries within the timeframe set out in this document; and
- (e) We expect that our customers treat fellow customers, Council team and Councillors with respect and courtesy. Anti-social behaviour including offensive or abusive language, and/or harassing or threatening behaviours, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Any Councillor or Council team member has the right to ask a customer to cease a conversation or indeed they may leave, if the customer's actions breach this code of behaviour.

### 2.3 Privacy

- (a) We will respect our customers' privacy and handle personal and confidential information in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*; and
- (b) We will only access confidential information for authorised work-related tasks.

### 3. CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

#### 3.1 In Person

- (a) The Council's Administration Centres are located at 71 High Street, Oatlands and 85 Main Street, Kempton and they are open Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. (closed on Public Holidays).

#### 3.2 By Phone

- (a) Telephone number at Oatlands is (03) 6254 5000 and Kempton is (03) 6259 3011
- (b) The Council's Switchboard is operational Monday to Friday from 8.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. (closed on Public Holidays), a recorded message function is available after hours that includes an after hours emergency contact number.

#### 3.3 By Email

Email address: [mail@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au](mailto:mail@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au)

#### 3.4 In Writing

You may write to:

The General Manager  
Southern Midlands Council  
PO Box 21  
OATLANDS, TAS 7120

#### 3.5 Councillors

Contact details for the Mayor and Councillors can be found on the Council's website [www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au](http://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au)

#### 3.6 Service Request

- (a) A service request may be lodged as an appeal for assistance to inspect, remove, replace, repair or reinstate Council infrastructure which may be damaged, missing or not operating. It can also be a request for a Council service or an appeal for action to be taken in respect of a nuisance, including stray or barking dogs.
- (b) To make a Service Request, please use one of the following options:
- Complete an online Service Request on the Council's website Home Page: [Service Request](#);
  - Complete a Service Request form, these forms are available from the Oatlands and Kempton Council offices;
  - Phone Oatlands (03) 6254 5000 or Kempton (03) 6259 3011.

## 4. COMPLAINTS

A complaint may be lodged as an expression of dissatisfaction, made to the Council in relation to its services, where a response or resolution is expected. Unsatisfactory conduct of an Officer(s) or failure to comply with the Service Standards will be treated as a complaint.

All complaints will be treated with seriousness, however if the complaint is found to be malicious, or is a repeated complaint to which a response has previously been given, the Council will take no further action. The customer will be informed of this decision in writing by the General Manager.

To make an official complaint, please write to the relevant departmental Manager and ensure the following details are included:

- (a) Your full name, address and telephone number, anonymous complaints may be accepted where there is a potential risk to persons or property; and
- (b) Sufficient details for the complaint to be actioned.

If a Council Officer or Manager is unable to resolve your complaint, or if you are not satisfied with the suggested resolution, you may choose to escalate your complaint to the General Manager. In this case, please forward your original complaint and related information to:

The General Manager  
Southern Midlands Council  
PO Box 21  
OATLANDS, TAS 7120

If you are dissatisfied with the Council's attempt to address your complaint, you may contact the Mayor or escalate your complaint further by contacting:

The Ombudsman  
GPO Box 960  
HOBART TAS 7001  
Phone: 1800 001 170  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au)

The Director  
Local Government Division  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
GPO Box 123  
HOBART TAS 7001  
Phone: 03 6232 7022  
Email: [lgd@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:lgd@dpac.tas.gov.au)

While you can refer your complaint directly to these bodies at any time, we strongly encourage you to approach the Council to investigate your complaint in the first instance.

Where a customer makes a complaint that the Council, a Councillor or the General Manager has failed to comply with the *Local Government Act 1993* or any other Act or may have committed an offence under that Act, the customer may, where they are not satisfied with the response, lodge the complaint with the Director of Local Government in accordance with *Section 339E* of the Act.

## 5. LEGISLATION AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Related legislation and internal documents include:

- (a) *Local Government Act 1993*
- (b) *Personal Information and Protection Act 2004*
- (c) *Right to Information Act 2009*
- (d) Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy.

It should be noted that some legislation determines approval, public notification and related response times that are outside the framework of this Customer Service Charter eg *Land Use Planning Approval Act 1993*, *Right to Information Act 2009*, etc. For further information in respect of State legislation please refer to the legislation online site [www.thelaw.tas.gov.au](http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au).

## 6. SERVICE STANDARDS

### 6.1 Contact by telephone

- (a) Our team will answer telephone enquiries promptly and courteously;
- (b) We aim to answer all questions at the first point of contact; and
- (c) If specialist attention is needed and the person required is available they will answer the call. Where the person required is not available, the call will be returned within two working days. (*Noting that some officers work on a part-time basis and depending on the timing of the call it will be returned on their next scheduled working day*).

### 6.2 Contact in writing

- (a) We aim to acknowledge both written and electronic (including social media) communication within three working days of receiving it and respond to the communication within 10 working days;
- (b) If we cannot respond within the set timeframes we will make contact to explain the reason for the delay and when a full reply can be expected;
- (c) We will use language that is clear and concise.

### 6.3 Service Requests

- (a) Where a service request is urgent and the matter places the safety of the community at a high risk, the matter will be dealt with immediately;
- (b) Where the matter is urgent and there is little risk to the safety of the community, the matter will be responded to within 48 hours;
- (c) Routine service requests will be dealt with according to the policies and procedures of the Council and guidelines as required by legislation.

### 6.4 Complaints

If you are dissatisfied or have concerns about the services, decisions or actions of the Council we would like to hear about it:

- (a) We will acknowledge receipt of your telephone complaint within one working day and resolve or respond to your complaint within 10 working days;
- (b) If we are unable to resolve your complaint within 10 working days we will contact you to explain why and advise the timeframe in which we will be able to resolve it;
- (c) If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved you can request a review against the complaint resolution process. The complaint will be escalated to the General Manager who will then undertake an investigation of the issue and make a determination on the matter; and
- (d) We will ensure all of our correspondence includes the name and contact details of the Officer dealing with the matter.

The *Local Government Act 1993* requires that the General Manager provide the Council with a report at least once a year detailing the number and the nature of the complaints received. Complaints received are reported in the Annual Report of the Council.

## 7. APPROVAL PROCESS

Section 339F(4) of the *Local Government Act 1993* requires a Council to review its customer service charter within 12 months after a council election.

<b><i>First Council Meeting Date:</i></b>	<i>November 2005</i>
<b><i>Final Council Meeting Date:</i></b>	<i>December 2005</i>
<b><i>Updated Council Meeting Date:</i></b>	<i>25<sup>th</sup> May 2016</i>
<b><i>Updated Council Meeting Date:</i></b>	<i>27<sup>th</sup> March 2019</i>
<b><i>Updated Council Meeting Date:</i></b>	<i>22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023</i>