

CORPORATE PROCEDURE



Procedure for Formal Complaints / Customer Service Feedback

Related Policy: Transparency and Accountability Policy
Department: Corporate Services
Author: Olga Smith and Mahnoor Khan
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Related Documents/Legislation: [CORP2015-098 – Bill 8 *Public Sector and MPP Accountability & Transparency Act* – Appointment of a Municipal Ombudsman, CORP2016-040 – Appointment of a Municipal Ombudsman (2016-2018)]
Attachments: Customer Service Feedback Form

PURPOSE

The Transparency and Accountability policy provides that the City shall provide good government that encourages public access and participation in decision making, delivering high quality of service, promoting the efficient and effective use of public resources and facilitates access to information within legal limitations. This procedure supports the Transparency and Accountability policy by enabling the City of Waterloo to provide guidance on the appropriate process to recognize, investigate, and respond to formal complaints from members of the public regarding City employees, programs, services, facilities, or operational procedures. This procedure will assist the City in providing excellent service to the public, and contribute to continuous improvement of operations.

SCOPE

Complaints can be made by any individual or group that either uses or is affected by City services.

This procedure applies to City employees, programs, services, facilities or operational procedures.

This procedure does NOT apply to:

- Requests for service;
- Feedback including opinions or comments;
- Compliments;

- Inquiries;
- Elected Officials;
- Anonymous complaints;
- Internal employee complaints, problems or concerns;
- Allegations of violations of Canada's Criminal Code;
- Allegations of Fraud;
- Complaints regarding staff members that are employed by a service provider contracted by the City shall be subject to the policies of that service provider;
- Issues addressed by legislation, or an existing municipal by-law, policy or procedure;
- A decision of Council or a decision of a committee of council;
- Matters that are handled by tribunals, courts of law, quasi-judicial boards, etc.

DEFINITIONS

What is a complaint?

A complaint is a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction related to a City program, service, facility, or employee, where a citizen believes that the City has not provided a service experience to the customer's satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

A complaint is distinct from:

- A request for service made on behalf of a citizen for a specific service, or to notify the City that a scheduled service was not provided on time. For clarity, a request for service is an inquiry about a City service, program or operation in general or specific terms, or a query about how to receive, request assistance, inform, determine cost, or how to use or access a service, program or operation.
- A general inquiry or specific request for information regarding City service;
- An opinion or feedback, comment, and expression of interest in a program or service;
- An expression of approval or compliment for a City staff member, program, product, or process; or
- A suggestion or idea submitted by a customer with the aim of improving services, programs, products or processes.

Who Can Make a Complaint?

Anyone who uses or is affected by City services can make a complaint under this procedure. This includes:

- Residents
- People who work in or visit the City of Waterloo
- Local businesses
- Community groups

PROCEDURE

How a complaint is made

- A complaint may be received verbally (In person or by telephone) or in writing
- The Customer Service Feedback Form may be used to submit a complaint

Initial receipt and handling of complaint

- Complainants are instructed to direct/address their complaints to the relevant service area or department.
- If complainants are not sure where to direct their complaints, they are provided with the address of the City Clerk's office general enquiry (email clerkinfo@waterloo.ca or telephone number 519-747-8549).
- Complaints not within the City Clerk's office program jurisdiction are forwarded to the appropriate service area or department and the complainant is advised.

Complaint review and escalation process

First Stage - Verbal

- Effort will be made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- When receiving a verbal complaint directly, staff will listen and understand the complaint and may attempt to resolve it.

Second Stage

- All written complaints begin at the second stage.
- Complaints are directed to appropriate service area or department.
- The manager and/or director of the appropriate service area or department shall review the complaint and may attempt to resolve the complaint immediately.
- If required the manager and/or director shall conduct a formal review of the complaint to determine its validity and explore resolution
- If the complaint has merit the manager and/or director shall:

- outline the action which will be taken by the City with the intent of resolving the complaint
- outline any required actions to be taken on the part of the complainant, including known fees and charges
- estimate time frames associated with the actions required to resolve the complaint
- For all verbal and written complaints, the manager and/or director shall indicate to the Complainant when they will contact them with a resolution or update.

Third Stage

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the manager or director, the complainant can be referred to the Commissioner of the department or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).
- The Commissioner or CAO may attempt to resolve the complaint immediately or may conduct a formal review and advise the complainant of the outcome of the review.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision of the Commissioner or CAO, or the complaint was not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by the end of the third stage, matters can be referred to the City Clerk who will advise the complainant of the opportunity for external review by the Provincial Ombuds