

REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOYDER

	Request for Service Policy & Procedure	Section: R
		Version No: 1.1
		Adopted: Feb 2015
		Reviewed: Jan 2017
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		Minutes Ref: 07/19
		Responsibility: CEO

1 Introduction

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."

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

1.1 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

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- Using Council resources effectively
- Guidelines and conditions of externally funded programs (eg. Home and Community Care)

2 Definitions

Council refers to The Regional Council of Goyder

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

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

3 What is a Request for Service?

A **Request for Service** is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service. Council also receives complaints and feedback across all areas of operations and clarification may be necessary to make the distinction for the purposes of this policy.

A **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with a service which has, or should have, been received. Council's Complaints Policy defines a complaint as: "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." 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.

4 Policy Statement

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.

4.1 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.

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4.2 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, uncollected rubbish bins will be collected within 48 hours and 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 respond within [10] business days advising of Council's intentions in regard to the request.

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
- Telephone
- Fax
- 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.

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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.goyder.sa.gov.au

1 Market Square, Burra SA 5417 or
25 Bruce Street, Eudunda SA 5374

Copies will be provided to interested parties upon request. Email council@goyder.sa.gov.au

9 Request for Service Procedure

This Standard Operating Procedure commences at the point that a request for service is received and covers processes for :

- distinguishing between requests, complaints and feedback to Council
- deciding how to respond to the request
- using requests to directly inform service improvements

The aim of this procedure, which is available on Council's website, is to ensure requests for service are addressed in a fair, consistent and structured process which is transparent to all customers. This procedure does not apply to matters that do not fall within Council's jurisdiction. These types of issues will be referred to appropriate external processes.

9.1 Responsibility

This procedure applies to all Council staff who may be involved in receiving or processing a request for service in the course of their work.

Officers will act reasonably and transparently, demonstrate good customer service, undertake their responsibilities in a proficient manner and use their judgement where necessary to ensure an outcome in line with Council's Request for Service Policy.

9.3 Principles Underlying this Procedure

This procedure, and the policy it accompanies, 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 procedure 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 and procedure
- Integration of different areas of Council where the customer request overlaps functional responsibilities

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10. Procedure

Council welcomes requests for service as a way of improving its services and programs as well as fulfilling the needs of its customers.

10.1 Assisting with the lodgement requests for service

No one should be excluded from lodging a request for service because of any difficulties they may have representing themselves. All staff are expected to offer assistance where appropriate and provide it on request, including assistance in documenting the request in writing when circumstances warrant.

10.1.2 Recording requests for service

Record details of the request in Council's Customer Request System, including.

- Date and time of call
- Taken by
- Customer's Name
- Customer's address
- Customer's contact phone numbers and email address
- Comprehensive information about the nature of the request
- Who assigned to
- Does the customer wish to be advised when the work is completed

10.2 Deciding how to respond to requests for service.

Each request must be assessed to determine its nature, how it should be dealt with, when it should be dealt with, and who should be involved.

Experience suggests that the majority of requests can be scheduled and actioned promptly. Some will require direction from a Director or, occasionally, a decision of Council.

Council's policy provides guidance on how to respond to requests by considering:

- The content of Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget. Does the request fit within the directions and programs which Council has agreed to, and budgeted for?
- Relevant Council policies and codes. Does the request fit within other agreed positions documented by Council?
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities. Can the request be accommodated within Council's agreed operating standards?
- An assessment of risk. Does the request relate to a matter which may impact on a public risk or Council risk?
- Statutory responsibilities. Is the request about a matter which Council has a statutory obligation to act upon?

Before determining Council's response it is also important to consider:

- Public safety and emergencies (the need and requirement of immediate action)
- Using Council resources efficiently and effectively
- The guidelines and conditions which apply to certain externally funded programs (eg. Home and Community Care)

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- The complexity of the response by Council (does it require an integrated approach from more than one department?)

Where possible, Council should advise customers what action will be taken in response to requests at the time of lodging. For routine requests refer to Council's service standards and intended work programs. Lodge the request using Council's preferred customer request system and advise the customer of the next steps.

More complex requests should be forwarded to the relevant Director for determination of how to respond. Ensure that the referral occurs promptly and the customer understands the process and timeline for the next action.

Where requests are for major work or new services they will be considered by Council in the preparation of the next Annual Business Plan.

10.2.1 Rejected requests for service

Where a request cannot be accommodated it is to be identified in the database as a rejected request.

10.3 Acknowledging requests for service and progress

Under the policy, Council aims to respond to customer requests as soon as possible, and at least within [10] business days, advising of Council's intentions in regard to the request.

If a request is rejected Council should explain the decision clearly and offer any possible alternative actions available to the customer, including reference to Council's Complaints Policy.

Where work is delayed customers should be informed of progress and the reasons for any delays.

If the customer has asked to be advised when the work is completed, this task is the responsibility of the employee who finalises the request.

10.4 Service Improvement

Learning from requests for service is a way of helping to improve Council's processes and procedures. Council therefore has systems to:

- record, analyse and report on the types of requests for service it receives
- apply the information to improve customer service.

Understanding the number and type of requests initiated by customers may suggest changes to policies, procedures or systems to improve service delivery. It is important to ensure that lessons learnt are put into practice.

All requests for service, including those which are rejected, must be recorded in Council's records management system in such a way that the information can also be analysed for service improvement opportunities.

10.4.1 At intervals determined by the number of requests received, the data on requests for service is reported to Executive Management in order to ensure that systemic issues are identified and addressed.

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- 10.4.2 Council is provided with reports containing data about requests for service, actions taken to address to them and changes made as a result at least twice a year.

11 Monitoring and Review of Procedure

This procedure was endorsed by The Regional Council of Goyder to take effect immediately. Thereafter it will be reviewed annually.

Document History	Version No:	Issue Date:	Description of Change:
	1.0	19/02/17	Adopted.
	1.1	19/01/19	Reviewed with changes. Refer NCOR-12016-140
	1.2	18/08/20	Minute....

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