

1. PURPOSE

To achieve and apply a common set of principles and behaviours across the organisation when dealing with internal and external customers for the guidance of all staff.

2. INTRODUCTION

At Horsham Rural City Council, we are committed to providing professional and quality services. In conjunction with our Customer Service Charter, these Customer Services Standards provide a commitment to our customers and staff, regarding a level of service we need to consistently deliver. A key part of this is to regularly communicate and review these standards as well as our performance against them.

3. SCOPE

All Council staff, irrespective of where they work within the organisation, are expected to take accountability and ownership of communications and interactions with internal and external customers to deliver a positive customer service experience.

4. ACTIONS

4.1 Staff behaviour and attitude

All staff are entitled to be treated with courtesy, respect and consideration. We will endeavour to share information with others and deliver what we say we will. We will cooperate across departments, treating each other with respect and courtesy and will act in a professional manner. All communication needs to be in line with our Council values:

F	Flexibility	We are adaptable to changing circumstances
A	Accountability	We are responsible for our behaviour and actions
I	Integrity	We are ethical, transparent and honest in our conduct
R	Respect	We value diversity and appreciate others

It is crucial that internal relationships and partnerships are strong and working well in order to provide a high standard of customer service. Due to the diversity and complexity of many of our services, several areas can be involved in delivering an outcome to a single customer request.

- Be polite and courteous when making a request for information or services. Be aware that staff have their own commitments to timelines
- Merit should be used for all service requests. Please ensure that all notes are clear for the receiving Officer
- If you are the Receiving Officer for a Merit request, please action the Merit request as soon as practicable. When closing the request, ensure that clear notes are added with what action was taken. If no action could be taken, please ensure that notes are clear as to why no action was taken. When appropriate, advise the customer of the outcome
- If you require assistance with using Merit, please see the Customer Service Supervisor for assistance/training

- Clarify if a request is urgent and the time required for a response to enable completion of a task
- A request for information or services from other departments is not an interruption but recognition that help is required to enable staff to complete their work. Be helpful in assisting other departments to deliver outcomes. It reflects well on all Council services when we work together
- Staff should be aware that they represent the organisation as a whole and therefore be prepared to assist with any enquiry as far as practicable
- Every request is your business
- Staff are asked to adopt a “can do” attitude making every endeavour to assist customers especially when dealing with multiple departments to achieve a final result.

4.2 Telephone communications with Internal and External Customers

All Council staff are expected to take accountability and ownership of calls and deliver a positive customer service experience. All staff should:

- Endeavour to answer phone calls within 4 rings
- Ensure there is someone in each service area to cover phones at all times
- Greet customers with: *Horsham Rural City Council “this is “your name”*.
- Be courteous and helpful
- Speak how you like to be spoken to, and treat others as you like to be treated
- Focus your listening skills on the customer
- Treat customers with fairness and honesty
- Politely ascertain the customer’s needs to ensure they are speaking to the right person
- Offer the translations or interpreting service on request - Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS 131 450)
- Call back the customer within 2 business days of receiving a message
- If unable to respond with an answer or action to customer’s enquiry within 2 business days, update the customer of the process, and the expected response time
- Set up a voicemail message on your office phone and mobile phone
- Mitel must be updated when you are unavailable – in meetings, gone for the day etc. Clear summary is to be provided as to when you will return and if enquiry should be redirected to anyone else eg *In meeting until 3pm or On annual leave until 05/05 – redirect all enquiries to John Doe.*

Transferring calls

- If transferring, advise the customer the name of the person and the service area to which they are being transferred.
- If the staff member you need to transfer the call to is unavailable, return to the customer and offer to take a message or advise the customer that they can leave a message on the staff member’s message service.

Misdirected calls

- Take ownership of the call and limit the number of phone call transfers. If a misdirected caller tells you they have already been transferred a number of times, then ‘case manage’ the caller:
 - Explain you will help them personally
 - Take their details and give them your details
 - Endeavour to call them back

- Pass on the details to correct staff member/service area and confirm they will call the customer
- Update the customer (let them know the staff member from the correct service area will be in contact with them shortly)
- Provide polite feedback to the appropriate team if they've sent you a misdirected phone call as to ensure that calls are directed to the correct area in future.

After hours calls

Council's After Hours Service manages after hours calls in accordance with supplied procedures

4.3 Correspondence – Email and Letters (External)

- Only correspondence received via council@hrcc.vic.gov.au will trigger an auto generated acknowledgement response
- The staff member responsible for actioning the request is to respond with an answer or action within 10 business days. If further time is required before the issue can be resolved the customer is to be kept informed on the process and the expected response time
- Correspondence received directly by staff must be registered in Councils Records Management System
- Use Council letterhead for all outgoing letters and use electronic delivery of letters where possible
- Include the Business Classification System (BCS) reference numbers on outgoing letters (available from the intranet)
- Follow the Hosham Rual City Council Writing Style Guidelines
- Avoid using all capital letters as this can be offensive
- Write clearly, professionally, and respectfully
- Include signature and contact details
- Proof read your writing thoroughly before sending
- If information has been requested from a staff member but the request needs to be forwarded to another staff member, ensure the original person requesting the information is kept advised.

4.4 Face to Face (External)

- Greet face-to-face customers with *'Hello, how can I help you?'* and a smile
- Wear your Council name tag to identify yourself
- Endeavour to have someone in each service area available for assistance at all times
- Give the customer your full attention (verbal and body language)
- Visually/verbally acknowledge waiting customers
- Make eye contact (be mindful of cultural differences) and focus your listening skills on the customer
- Be mindful of the customer's personal space
- Treat customers with fairness and honesty
- Don't make assumptions about customers based on their culture or appearance
- Always be courteous and helpful
- Speak how you like to be spoken to, answer how you like to be answered, treat others as you like to be treated
- Put yourself in the customer's shoes and listen to what they have to say
- Politely ascertain the customer's needs to ensure they are speaking to the right person
- Offer the Interpreting Service if needed
- Always make sure that you are clear about the responding time frame to the customer

- Reassure the customer of confidentiality and privacy
- If an enquiry is of a more sensitive nature, offer the customer the option to discuss the matter in a more private setting eg meeting room

4.5 Dealing with Difficult Customers

- Ensure your safety is a priority
- If you feel unsafe, withdraw from the unsafe area
- Remain calm and in control
- Focus on the main issue
- Verbal or physical abuse is not acceptable. Advise the customer that you will not tolerate abuse
- Advise customer you will help when they are courteous
- Be careful of your use of language – use “I” and not “you” language
- Seek assistance from a Director, Manager, Coordinator or other staff members

4.6 Staff On leave

If you are on leave or unavailable for more than a day, arrange to:

- Change your status on Mitel and include any relevant information eg when you will return and who to redirect any enquiry to. If applicable, divert your phone to another staff member within the service area or update your message service
- Notify the customer service team of your absence
- Activate Out of Office on your email. Clearly state when you will return and where the enquiry can be redirected to if applicable.

4.7 Privacy Information Considerations

Council employees are responsible and accountable for ensuring the security and confidentiality of records containing personal information (e.g. name, address, phone number, etc). Unless required by law, personal information must not be released without written consent from the individual the information relates to, or their legal representative.

When collecting private information for a project or submission only request information required for the satisfactory completion of that task.

Every person has a legal right of access to Council records unless they meet certain criteria that exempt them from public review (i.e. records such as those of a personal, financial, confidential or legal nature). Council records must not be accessed or disclosed, directly or indirectly, except in the course of normal duties or with express authority from Council’s Information Privacy / Freedom of Information Officer. Council has a detailed Information Privacy Policy and Privacy Statement available on the website that should be referred to.

4.8 Cultural Considerations

Some culturally diverse groups may not be comfortable with eye contact or people of the opposite gender interacting with each other. It is important to be respectful of the cultural and religious needs of customers.

4.9 Access and Ability Considerations

All staff should be aware of the diverse abilities of customers. A disability may be visible or invisible, temporary or permanent, and cover a range of physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric and neurological disabilities and chronic illness.

4.10 Service Level Standards

Council is committed to delivering the best possible service that can be practically achieved. It is important that we set expectations about the time our processes and services may take. Attached as Appendix A is a list of the standard timeframes for the commonly used services we provide.

5. COMMUNICATION

This procedure will be communicated via staff meetings, intranet and staff induction training. Continuous training will occur.

6. RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Owner: Customer Service Team Leader

7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Document	Location
HRCC Complaint Handling Policy	Intranet , HRCC website
HRCC Customer Service Charter	Intranet , HRCC website
HRCC Organisational Writing Style guidelines	Intranet
HRCC Staff Code of Conduct	Intranet
HRCC Information Privacy Policy	Intranet
HRCC Inwards correspondence procedure	Intranet
HRCC Records Management Policy	Intranet

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version Number	Approval Date	Approval By	Amendment
01	1 st September 2014	EMG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaces Customer Service Staff Standards and Procedures
02	21 January 2020	EMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaces Staff Standards and Procedures for Managing Customers

Appendix A – Service Commitments

Animal Management

- We will audit every registered domestic animal business annually to ensure compliance with relevant codes of practice
- We will initiate investigation into complaints of dog attacks against people or animals within 2 to 24 hours of a report being received

Art Gallery

- We will allocate a staff person to take responsibility for customer requests and enquiries and advise the customer who their contact person is
- The Gallery Director will review and action outstanding matters monthly

Building Management

- We will commence investigation for urgent maintenance requests for Council buildings within 1 working day of a request, or on the same day if time permits
- We will commence investigation for non-urgent maintenance requests for council buildings within 5 working days of a request
- We will remove, obliterate or conceal graffiti within 24 hours from Council owned property, or from when consent is received from the property owner or occupier

Building Services

- We will endeavour to process your building permit application within 30 days
- We will provide building information certificates within 5 working days of an application being received
- We will undertake mandatory inspections of your building works by appointment made within 24 hours
- We will streamline your application through our online permit system
- We will provide copies of building plans and permits within 7 working days of an application being received. Copies may not be available for properties over 40 years old
- We will process applications for reports and requests to building regulations within 15 statutory days of an application being received
- We will commence investigations into complaints/concerns relating to dangerous buildings and unfenced pools or spas within 2 working days of a complaint being received.
- We will assess and initiate appropriate action for complaints/concerns relating to building works/matters within 10 working days

Recreational Services

- We will endeavour to respond to community enquiries and feedback within 2 weeks
- We will be available to meet with users and clubs to discuss future planning and funding opportunities

Appendix A – Service Commitments

- We will keep user groups informed via a bi-monthly e-newsletter of upcoming events, training opportunities, grants, compliance and guidelines

Drainage and Cleansing

- We will remove roadside rubbish and litter or issue a compliance notice within 5 working days of a request being received. We will remove dead animals from Council roads and paths within 1 working day of a report being received
- We will investigate blocked Council owned drains and pits within 5 working days of a report being received
- We will inspect and make safe missing or damaged pit lids within 24 hours of a report being received

Environmental Health

- We will commence investigation of public health nuisance concerns that don't pose an immediate health risk within 48 hours of notification
- We will ensure that registrations under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act and Food Act are assessed within 10 working days following receipt of relevant documentation, payment of fees and satisfactory inspection
- We will assess and issue Septic Tank permits within the 42 day statutory timeframe

Fire Prevention

- We will assess permits to burn within 10 working days of a request being received
- We will undertake property inspections for fire hazard requests during the fire danger period within 5 working days of notification
- We will undertake property inspections for long grass requests during non-fire danger period within 10 working days of notification

Governance

- Council minutes will be made available 5 working days after a Council meeting
- We will make sure the Council Agenda is available on our website by 5pm on Thursday prior to Council meetings
- We will meet deadlines with requests for information and inform you if this is not possible and the reason why
- We will implement, monitor and review our policies and procedures within the required timelines

Home and Community Care

- We will advise you if you are eligible for Community Care Services within 3 working days and if eligible a service assessment will be arranged with you

Appendix A – Service Commitments

- If we do not provide the Community Care Services you require, you will be referred to other service providers who do provide that service within 5 working days
- If we are informed your circumstances have changed, we will contact you to discuss your Community Care Services within 5 working days
- In exceptional circumstances, Community Care meals and/or personal care services determined by service delivery as urgent will commence within 1 to 3 working days
- For Community Care Services assessed as non urgent, we will contact you within 7 working days to discuss your service commencement

Maternal and Child Health

- We will contact you within 5 working days of Council being notified that your baby has been discharged to make a time for a Maternal and Child Health nurse to visit you in your home
- All first time parents will be invited to attend a new parent group before their child reaches 3 months of age
- We will provide bimonthly immunisation sessions to enable all babies to access immunisations in accordance with the Victorian immunisation schedule

Park Services

- We will investigate and make safe general parks maintenance (non-urgent) requests within 10 working days
- We will attend to emergency playground requests within 24 hours of a report being received
- Land owners eligible for Shared Cost Fencing will receive confirmation of the amount Council will contribute within 10 working days

Performances & Events – Horsham Town Hall

- We will issue hire agreements within 5 days of receiving all confirmed information.
- Details of performance settlements will be sent through 5 working days after the event.

Planning

- We will endeavour to make a decision on your planning application within the 60 day statutory timeframe
- We will make your application available online to allow for progress tracking
- We will be available for pre-application meetings by appointment
- We will inform you and engage with the community on statutory and strategic planning for the municipality
- We will request further information on planning applications when required within the 28 day statutory timeframe

Appendix A – Service Commitments

Rates

- We will process copies of rates notices within 2 working days of a request being made
- We will process standard Land Information Certificates within 5 working days of an application being received
- We will process urgent Land Information Certificates within 1 working day of an application being received
- We will process requests for owner information for fencing purposes within 3 working days

Residential Waste Services Kerbside Bins

- We will replace missing or unrepairable bins within 7 working days of request being received
- We will provide bins to new residential properties within 7 working days of occupation when notified by the resident or occupier
- We will collect missed bin collections due to driver error within 1 working day of report being received

Transport Infrastructure Maintenance (Roads, footpath, kerb and channel, drainage, bridge, causeways, cycleway and signage)

- Any urgent service requests will be attended and made safe within 24 hours after notification is received
- Damaged or missing drainage pit lids, grates in pedestrian area or in traffic lane will be rectified within 24 hours
- All other non-emergency service requests will be inspected within 1-2 weeks depending on risk level. Customers will be notified once the inspection is completed
- All sealed roads maintenance issues including potholes, debris on road, excessive deformation of pavements will be rectified between two weeks to eight weeks depending on location of the issue and the risk level.
- All unsealed gravelled roads will be routinely graded at 12 months to 24 months interval depending on its function and utilization. All service requests which couldn't be covered with scheduled maintenance program will be rectified within two months to 24 months depending on the risk level
- An email notification of completion of service request will be sent after completion of transport infrastructure maintenance related requests
- All the above transport infrastructure related service standards are extracts of council's Road Management Plan. For specific details and accurate response time, please follow the road management plan available at <https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Residents/Roads-and-Transport/Road-Management-Plan>

Stormwater Management

- We will provide standard legal points of discharge information within 5 working days of an application being received

Appendix A – Service Commitments

Subdivisions

- We will refer subdivision applications for certification to external referral authorities within 7 days of lodgement
- We will certify compliant applications within the 49 statutory days

Traffic and Parking Management

- We will allow 21 days for residents and property owners to submit a response when consulting with the community on changes to parking restrictions.
- We will allow 21 days for residents and property owners to submit a response when consulting with the community on proposed Local Traffic Management Schemes.

Trees and Horticulture

- We will attend to emergency tree requests on Council land within 24 hours of a report being received.
- We will investigate routine tree maintenance requests on Council Land within 10 working days of a request being received