



Dealing with our Customers

Policy and Procedure

Staff Responsible	General Manager – Community Services
Created	June 2018
Reviewed	September 2025
Review Date	September 2030

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide the principles and procedure that will apply when dealing with customer issues/complaints (**Matter**).

Waitomo District Council (**WDC**) is committed to providing high quality services and delivering a high standard of customer service.

Customers will be treated fairly and considerately when accessing WDC services whether in person, by phone, in writing, by email or by internet enquiry.

WDC values, encourages and welcomes customer feedback. WDC will take any Matter seriously, work with the customer to resolve any issues, and use the customer's comments and feedback as an opportunity to learn and enhance WDC services.

2. Scope

Customers are encouraged to inform WDC if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of WDC service. WDC will, where possible, address a customer Matter in a fair, timely and confidential manner to achieve positive outcomes for customers and staff.

Note: Where Legislation requires a specific process, then the customer will be referred to that legal process, i.e. Environment Court, or the Police.

WDC must also consider applicable legislation and will manage Matters within the requirement of legislation that it works under i.e. Local Government Act 2002, Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, Privacy Act 1993, the Building Act 2004 and the Resource Management Act 1991.

3. Policy

3.1 Customer Matter - Defined

A Customer Matter is defined as:

3.1.1 An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more WDC customers, residents, ratepayers and visitors about WDC, including but not limited to:

- a) actions or lack of actions; and/or
- b) decisions; and/or
- c) the standard of service provided by or on behalf of WDC, and

where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected by the customer.

3.1.2 A Customer Matter is not:

- a) A request for routine services, however, a Matter may result from the request.
- b) A request for readily available information.
- c) Allegations against a contractor or staff member of serious misconduct such as sexual harassment, fraud or assault.
- d) Complaints from one staff member about another.
- e) Matters for which there is a right of appeal, objection and/or legal remedy.
- f) Feedback as part of a formal consultation process.
- g) A part of a process that WDC is obliged or required, by statute, to apply.

3.2 Principles

The following principles apply.

WDC will:

- a) be mindful of the need to minimise customer effort to resolve the Matter;
- b) try to see things from the customer's perspective, to understand and address why they think there is an issue;
- c) resolve the Matter as close to the point of service delivery as possible;
- d) treat the Matter as a priority and give a timely response where possible;
- e) communicate with the customer in a way that is easy to understand;
- f) be fair and act with integrity at all times;
- g) not be defensive;
- h) ensure that the Matters raised are assessed on their own merits;
- i) learn from the Matters raised and use this knowledge to improve how WDC does things;
- j) acknowledge any WDC mistakes as to process and put right if possible;
- k) maintain a centralised digital register of all Matters, suggestions and compliments within MAGIQ;
- l) Act in accordance with the defined and agreed processes and procedures;
- m) actively manage any customer conduct that negatively and unreasonably impacts on the organisation and WDC staff;
- n) educate WDC staff to apply the policy, processes and procedures for Matter resolution.

3.3 Customer Matter Prioritisation

Matters will be handled by WDC as and when they are received in accordance with this Policy, however, some Matters may be escalated to a General Manager, this may include but is not limited to:

- a) a request for a review of a WDC decision by the customer, either explicit or implicit;
- b) where the Matter involves a significant risk or is complex;
- c) the volume of Matters received is significant and is in relation to the same Matter;
- d) an impact on organisational reputation; or
- e) where behaviour from the customer is difficult.

If a Matter is escalated, the management process and timeframe for that Matter to be handled will be defined on a case-by-case basis.

3.4 Customer Behaviour

Customers may behave out of character when distressed or upset. There may be circumstances leading up to the Matter that WDC staff are not aware of. WDC does not accept that forceful or determined behaviour is appropriate behaviour towards WDC staff. WDC will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards staff, verbal or otherwise.

The behaviour or actions of a customer is unacceptable if, (for example):

- WDC staff are abused verbally,
- Persistent same complaints, despite it having been fully investigated, or persist in seeking an unrealistic outcome, or
- Repeatedly change aspects of the desired outcome part way through an investigation by WDC.

Where staff handling a Matter consider that the customer's behaviour or actions is unacceptable, they should advise the customer and their reasons and that the customer process will be suspended. The service will recommence on receipt of an undertaking from the customer that they will suitably modify their behaviour. The General Manager must be notified in writing.

3.5 Unresolved Matter

WDC will endeavour to address a Matter to the best of its ability, however there may be occasions when WDC will not be able to provide the outcome the customer seeks.

A response will be provided to the customer and the Matter record closed by the authorised staff member. The Customer and Information Manager will provide a monthly report to the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) regarding all Matters.

If the customer considers they have been treated unfairly by WDC, they can refer the Matter to the Ombudsman. WDC will provide the Ombudsman's contact details to the customer.

3.6 Exceptions

Although it is intended that all Matters will be dealt with under this process, there may be exceptions that arise as a result of other review processes or legislation. Examples may include:

- a) matters that are criticisms or disagreement with WDC Policy or decisions,
- b) matters that constitute a disagreement with or refusal to accept actions that WDC is obliged, or required by statute, to apply,
- c) matters where the customer or WDC has started legal proceedings or has taken court action,
- d) matters that have previously been heard by a court or tribunal,
- e) insurance claims,
- f) any other Matter where another formal process has been commenced,
- g) where another formal complaint process exists, e.g. a statutory requirement,
- h) where a formal right of appeal or objection already exists.

The management of exceptions falls outside this Policy, with each situation suitably managed given all the circumstances. An exceptions report will be provided to the Chief Executive and SMT. Preparation of the report will be the responsibility of the Customer and Information Manager.

3.7 Monitoring

All Matters will be investigated and responded to, where possible, in confidence and in accordance with the needs of the investigation and the Local Government Act 2002. To enable this Policy to be adequately reviewed and revised, monitoring of WDC compliance with this Policy will be undertaken regularly by the Customer and Information Manager.

The information will be used to provide management the necessary information to monitor WDC performance and feed into the process for identifying areas for service improvement. The information will be reported to WDC's Senior Management Team. This will be the responsibility of the Customer and Information Manager.

4. Procedure

4.1 How does a Customer raise a Matter?

A customer can raise a Matter in person, at the WDC office, by telephone, letter, email or via the WDC website. The customer will be required to provide their name, contact details and sufficient information regarding the Matter to enable an informal investigation.

The following information will be recorded:

- a) Name and contact details of the customer (where there are no requirements for anonymity);
- b) Details of the Matter;
- c) Tracking/progress information;
- d) Resolution information; and
- e) Further redress information provided and any action taken.

4.2 Acknowledging a Customer Matter

WDC will acknowledge the customer Matter raised, by way of a letter, email or phone call and will include a reference number, a brief summary of the issue and WDC contact details. In the event that a full response can be made within two working days of receiving the Matter, an acknowledgement will not be sent.

4.3 Responding to a Customer Matter

Matters raised by a customer will be responded to as quickly as possible by the most appropriate method. Where a response or resolution is made by telephone, written records will be kept and written confirmation sent. This will cover:

- a) Date and person responding to the customer;
- b) Details of the investigation;
- c) The outcome (e.g. whether the Matter is upheld, action taken, apology or reason why WDC is unable to assist); and
- d) Information on the right of further redress and escalation if the customer remains dissatisfied

4.4 Response to a Customer Matter

Matters of a more complex nature may take longer than anticipated to investigate. If this is the case, the customer will be informed of the reasons why the time frames has been extended and when they can expect to receive a full response.

4.5 Matters Raised Anonymously

Matters raised anonymously will be given consideration and dealt with by the Customer and Information Manager as appropriate, dependent on the details of the information given. This includes any Matters that may be laid anonymously under the whistle-blower legislation.

5 Authorisation

The General Manager - Community Services has authorised implementation of this policy.

Policy Approved



General Manager – Community Services

26 September 2025

Date