



Feedback and Complaint Policy 2023



Owner: Chief Executive

Review frequency: Three yearly or as required.

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1. Policy Objectives

- 1.1 The Feedback and Complaints Policy (the Policy) sets out how the Ruapehu District Council (Council) manages public feedback and complaints.

2. Policy Scope

- 2.1 The Policy covers feedback and complaints about Council services and facilities.
- 2.3 Under the scope of the Policy a complaint does **not** include:
- (a) Complaints about Council staff. These complaints will be dealt with by Council's Human Resources Department.
 - (b) A suggestion which does not require a formal response.
 - (c) Requests for information or services.
 - (d) Any internal complaint from one staff member against another.
 - (e) A complaint over which the customer or Council have begun legal proceedings, or which has already been heard by a court or tribunal.
 - (f) Part of a process that the Council is obliged or required by statute to follow.
 - (g) Any matter for which there is a right of appeal and/or legal remedy.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Complaint** – a complaint is defined as feedback that includes an expression of dissatisfaction of which requires a response or resolution.

- 3.1.1 A complaint may be related to the Council's:

- (a) action or lack of action.
- (b) services
- (c) facilities.

- 3.2 **Confidential/Anonymous Complaint** – the complainant does not wish to provide information that might identify them. These complaints will be logged, assessed, and used for process improvement but will not involve further communication with the customer.

- 3.3 **Dissatisfied Complaint** – A complaint which cannot be rectified by a standard response.

- 3.4 **Feedback/Suggestion** – It is substantively similar to a complaint, but the customer does not require a formal response. This type of customer contact will be logged, assessed, and used for process improvement but will not involve further communication with the customer.

- 3.5 **Service Request** – feedback requesting Council to undertake services to address issues. An example of this is complaints about over-grown branches obstructing a public walkway. The feedback will be logged as a service request to the appropriate team to resolve but will not necessarily involve further communication with the customer.

- 3.6 **Unreasonable Complaint** – A complainant may be deemed to be unreasonable where current or previous contact with them shows that they have met **two** or more of the following criteria:

- (a) Persisting in pursuing a complaint where the Council's Feedback and Complaints Process has been fully and properly implemented.

- (b) Changing the substance of a complaint or persistently raising new issues or seeking to prolong contact by unreasonably raising further matters while the complaint is being dealt with.
- (c) Unwillingness to accept documented evidence as being factual (this could include persons who do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify after a long period of time has elapsed).
- (d) Focusing on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance (while aware that determining what is trivial can be subjective, and that careful judgement is required).
- (e) Have had an excessive amount of contact with Council when pursuing a complaint, placing unreasonable demands on staff.
- (f) Are known to have electronically recorded meetings or conversations without prior knowledge and consent of the other parties involved.
- (g) Display unreasonable demands or expectations and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable once a clear explanation is provided as to what constitutes an unreasonable demand.

4. Principles

4.1 When handling complaints, Council commit to:

- (i) Seeing things from the customer's perspective, to understand and address why they believe Council were wrong.
- (ii) Resolve the complaint at first point of contact.
- (iii) Communicate in a way that is easy to understand.
- (iv) Be fair and act with integrity.
- (v) Ensure that the issues raised are assessed on their own merits.
- (vi) Learn from complaints and use this knowledge to improve how Council does things.
- (vii) Manage complaints in accordance with the defined process and procedures.
- (viii) Educate Council staff to apply the Policy, processes, and procedures for complaint resolution.

4.2 Ensuring that these principles are followed can help Council resolve a problem quickly, without the need to escalate the perceived issue.

5. Background

5.1 The Feedback and Complaints Policy was developed to ensure customers, citizens, ratepayers, and visitors of the Ruapehu District understand how Council will deal with complaints.

5.2 Council will manage complaints within the requirements of relevant legislation and codes of practice that Council works under, including:

- (a) Employment Relations Act 2000
- (b) The Local Government Official Information and Meeting Act (LGOIMA) 1987
- (c) Privacy Act 1993
- (d) Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- (e) NZ Standards that contain contract specifications for complaints management.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Complaints Procedure

6.1.1 Customers can submit feedback or make a complaint through any of the following mechanisms:

- (a) Over the phone
- (b) In writing (email or letter)
- (c) In person
- (d) Through Council's website
- (e) Through Council's social media platforms (by direct or private message only)

6.1.2 All complaints must include contact details and a description of the complaint to allow Council to effectively deal with the matters raised in the complaint.

6.1.3 When making a complaint, complainants **must**:

- (a) Provide a description of the complaint that clearly identifies the issues or concerns being raised.
- (b) Provide all relevant information about the complaint – to the best of their ability.
- (c) Cooperate with a request for additional information or investigation necessary to deal with the complaint.
- (d) Act honestly and declare conflicts of interest.
- (e) Treat the people handling the complaint with courtesy and respect.

6.2 Council Response

6.2.1 Complaints received are filtered and organised into four categories:

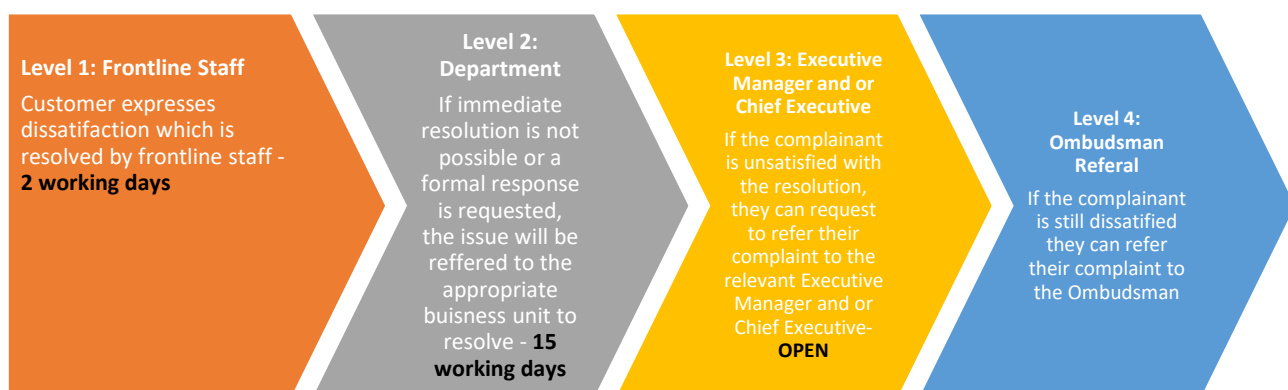
- (a) Standard complaint
- (b) Service request
- (c) Feedback
- (d) Dissatisfied complaint

6.2.2 Where Council receives a complaint that does not meet the criteria referenced under 6.1, the staff member responsible for managing the complaint should contact the complainant for further information and to provide additional guidance on raising a complaint with Council in accordance with this policy.

6.2.3 When complaints are received in written form, Council staff will arrange to send a response as soon as possible to the complainant to inform them that their complaint has been received.

6.2.4 Complaints about Council staff conduct will be dealt with by Council's Human Resources Department.

6.3 Scale of response



6.3.1 **Level 1** – In the case where the complaint is not able to be resolved by frontline staff, the complaint acknowledgement will include information about the steps Council will take to resolve the matter raised.

- 6.3.2 Level 2** – If the complaint is unable to be resolved by the frontline staff, the issue will be referred to the appropriate business unit to resolve. Council staff will work to resolve the issue within 15 working days, but if they are unable to resolve it within this time frame, Council staff will inform the complainant as soon as possible.
- 6.3.3 Level 3** – If the complainant is unsatisfied with the resolution, they can request to refer their complaint to the relevant Executive Manager and or Chief Executive.
- 6.3.4 Level 4** – If the complainant remains dissatisfied with Council’s procedure, they can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman [Complaints about government agencies | Ombudsman New Zealand](#).

7. Annotations

Date	Description
2008	The policy was first adopted
2015	The policy was last reviewed and amended
2023	The second review and update of the Policy

8. Policy Version Control

Policy drafted by	The Policy Team
Policy reviewed by	The Policy Team
Policy reviewed and recommended by the Information System Governance Group (ISGG)	N/A
Policy reviewed and recommended by the Audit and Assurance Committee	N/A
Policy reviewed and adopted by Council	N/A
Policy reviewed and adopted by the Executive Leadership Team	12 September 2023

