12.2 OUTCOME OF PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

ATTACHMENTS:	**1. ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES REPORT** **2. COMPLAINTS_MANAGEMENT_POLICY MARCH 2024** **3. COMPLAINT_MANAGEMENT_PROCEDURES MARCH 2024**
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CITY STRATEGY OUTCOME:	**5.1 – BE HONEST, TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE IN ALL THAT WE DO**
MEETING DATE:	**25 MARCH 2024**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report on the submissions received in response to the public exhibition and to seek Council's adoption of the revised *Complaints Management Policy 2024*.

2. OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. **Adopt the Complaints Management Policy 2024 as amended and attached to this report (Attachment 2).**
2. **Note that the Complaint Management Policy 2024 supersedes the Complaints Management Policy 2019.**
3. **Write to everyone that provided a submission to thank and notify them of the outcomes of the exhibition.**
4. **Authorise the Interim Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the Complaints Management Policy 2024 which do not alter the intent.**
5. **Note the updated Complaints Management Procedure (Attachment 3), which sets out how the Policy will be implemented.**

3. BACKGROUND

The *Customer Experience (CX) Strategy 2023 – 2025* was adopted by Council in April 2023, to provide a framework and approach for Council to deliver an improved experience for our customers. This Strategy identifies our customer experience commitment: 'The goal of our customer experience is to make life easier for customers through consistent and responsive services that build trust in us'.

The CX Strategy identified an action to enhance our complaints management processes, to improve the handling and resolution of issues. The *Complaints Management Policy* (the Policy) was last adopted by Council on 22 July 2019. In December 2023, Council resolved to place the *Complaints Management Policy and Procedure* on public exhibition.

This report provides the outcome of the public exhibition of the revised *Complaints Management Policy* and recommends adoption of the *Complaints Management Policy 2024*.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the *Complaints Management Policy* (the Policy) is to provide a framework for Council to ensure appropriate management of complaints. The Policy is supported by the *Complaints Management Procedure* (the Procedure) which provides details on Council's arrangements and processes relating to complaints management.

Our *Complaints Management Policy* is shaped by the NSW Ombudsman guidelines, embodies our commitment to customer experience outcomes: responsiveness, engaging, easy, consistent, and human. This policy has been refined to ensure a straightforward process for both customers and staff. Aligned closely with the NSW Ombudsman's model, it provides clearer definitions, roles, and responsibilities while implementing operational improvements to enhance the overall customer experience during the complaints process.

Exhibition process:
The D*raft Complaints Management Policy and associated procedures (December 2023)* were placed on public exhibition between 22 January and 18 February 2024.

The public exhibition process included:

- The creation of a Have Your Say portal page, including an online survey and written submission option
- An invitation to the Have Your Say database of 8,800 members and Council's newsletters
- The survey was promoted via social media: 2,191 customers were reached; 54 engagements; and, 16 click throughs to the survey
- Postcards with QR code to the Have Your Say survey were placed at key customer touch points including the customer service desk, Dougherty Centre reception and libraries across the local government area
- Specific notifications to the 31 stakeholders who participated in the customer journey mapping interviews
- An in-depth interview with a responder who wished to provide targeted feedback.

In the plan for public exhibition, a focus group was envisaged and promoted through the above actions, however due to insufficient interest, the focus group did not proceed.

Feedback received:
The Engagement Outcomes Report (**Attachment 1**) provides detailed information regarding the consultation.

Of the five survey responses received, Council received three in support of the Policy and associated procedures. Two responses did not support the policy and did not provide a reason for not supporting the policy.

Two key themes emerged from the feedback received:

1. Minor wording and formatting changes to references in the Policy and Procedure documents.
This feedback resulted in revisions to the draft Policy and Procedure, namely:

- Inclusion of the definition of a complaint, including what does and does not constitute a complaint, in procedure and policy.
- Errors noted in section 4.2 – the 3 references in the definition section should have been numbered 6 instead of 7

2. A need for consistency in Council's customer service
This is feedback that is beyond the policy, however, it is recognised as important and a key to the implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy. In relation specifically to complaints, a number of operational improvements are being implemented to incorporate feedback from customers about improving consistency in our customer service, including:

- A new online complaints and feedback form will be made available on Council's website
- New training programs that set clear expectations for staff which will be developed and made available on the intranet
- Templates will be updated to assist staff and customers to make or manage a complaint
- Develop improved reporting and analysis to track complaint outcomes through the Voice of the Customer (VOC) program
- Improved reporting on efficiencies gained and continuous improvement initiatives.

The online complaints and feedback form and associated customer FAQs will be promoted and communicated to customers via our digital channels.

The revised Policy and Procedure in this report, reflects the feedback received from customers, Councillors and staff during the public exhibition period.

5. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The revised *Complaints Management Policy 2024* and procedure will support transparent management of complaints and ongoing improvements to the customer experience.

This revised Policy and associated Procedure supports the implementation of our Customer Experience Strategy and reinforces our customer commitments to be more responsive, engaging, easy to work with and consistent in our service.

6. CONCLUSION

The revised *Complaints Management Policy 2024* reflects the feedback received from customers, Councillors and staff our complaints processes. This supports the implementation of the *Customer Experience Strategy* and achievement of our commitment to our customers.

It is recommended that the revised *Complaints Management Policy 2024* (**Attachment 2)** be adopted.

7. IMPLICATIONS COMMENT

City Strategy Outcome	5.1 – Be honest, transparent and accountable in all that we do
Business Plan Objectives, Outcomes / Services	Once adopted, the revised *Complaints Policy Management Policy* will support improved management of complaints and support ongoing improvements to the Customer Experience.
Policy	This matter relates to Council's *Complaints Management Policy 2019* and recommends an updated policy be adopted by Council to better reflect Council's arrangements and processes relating to complaints management.
Consultation	This is the subject of this report.
Risk	There is no risk associated to this report. The revised *Complaints Management Policy* will support the provision of transparent means for the management of complaints and support ongoing improvements to Customer Experience.
Resource	This has been developed with internal resources.
Legal	Transparent management of complaints ensures best experience for customer and prevents further escalation to external agencies if complaints are not dealt with correctly.
Legislation	There are no implications applicable to this report.
Budget/Financial	There are no implications applicable to this report.

Draft Complaints Policy and Procedure – Summary of Community Engagement

Background

At the Council meeting held on 11 December 2023 it was resolved to place on public exhibition the draft Complaints Management Policy that can improve our complaints processes to better align to our customer commitment.

Summary

The public exhibition of the proposed amendment was undertaken from the 22 January 2023 to 18 February 2024 via Council's Have Your Say platform through a survey and opportunity for written submissions.

An email was sent to over 8800 "Have Your Say' participants through our Council Newsletter on 24 January 2023 to invite them to respond to the survey.

The survey was promoted via social media of which 2191 customer were reached with 54 engagements with 16 click throughs to the survey. Postcards with QR code to 'Have Your Say' survey were placed in key customer touch points including the customer service desk, Dougherty Centre reception and libraries across Willoughby. 31 customers who participated in the recent customer journey mapping of the Council complaints process were also invited to provide feedback.

A focus group was offered via the 'Have Your Say' survey to customers to provide more detailed feedback. One customer expressed interest in the workshop, a formal personal one on one interview was undertaken as an alternate.

A total of ten survey questions were asked, with the two primary questions focusing on support for the amendment and an opportunity to comment. A copy of the questions is included in Figure 3.

Nineteen people visited the dedicated 'Have Your Say' webpage, five (5) people completed the survey, with two (2) people providing comments. The suburbs represented were Chatswood with three responses, Artarmon with one response and Northbridge with one response.

No formal written submissions were received.

The low response rate may have been influenced by concurrent Willoughby City Council consultations that received submissions during the same timeframe.

Have your Say Survey

The key survey question was Question 6: 'Please let know us your level of support or otherwise for this proposal?' Three (3) out of five (5) people were supportive and two (2) were unsupportive of the amendment.

Figure 1 – Have Your Say Responses

Have Your Say survey responses				
Fully Support	*Partially Support*	*Fully Oppose*	*Partially Oppose*	*Neutral*
3	0	2	0	0

Figure 2 – Summary of sentiment – Have your say comments

Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to leave comments. Two (2) respondents who fully supported the survey provided feedback, while the respondent who fully opposed did not provide any comments. Among the comments received, one (1) addressed an amendment to document formatting, while the other detailed a specific complaint and recounted their service experience.

The survey comments are outlined below;

No	Submission	Sentiment	Response
1.	We as residents have made numerous complaints about the noise and over use of Northbridge oval. Especially in regards to parking outside our own homes. Some Council members have been fantastic other have been extremely dismissive.	Comments related to service provided by Council at different points. Supportive of Policy	Comment noted. The changes made to operational process will improve the completion or complaints and the consistency of service provided by Council.
2.	• I have two suggestions:- Complaints Policy – there are errors in section 4.2 – the 3 references to the definition section should be numbered 6 not 7 • Complaints Procedures – I think the document would be improved if the definition of what does and does not constitute a complaint, that is described well in the Policy, should be duplicated in this document	Comment related to how elements of the policy is written. Supportive of Policy	Reviewed and changed policy and procedure based on feedback.

Face to face interview

No	Feedback	Sentiment	Response
3.	• Positively supports the revised Complaints Management Policy. • Expressed support for to Section 6 of the Complaints Management Policy; whereby the investigation of a complaint will not be undertaken by a staff member who is the subject matter of the complaint • Expressed support for the creation of a Complaints Coordinator role • Commented on Section 5.6 of the Complaints Management Policy (and Section 4 of the Procedures), noting that repeated contact made seeking an outcome may be incorrectly considered 'unreasonable conduct'.	Feedback related to clarity regarding policy relating to unreasonable conduct Positive feedback regarding policy and its approach	Directed the respondent to Appendix 1 of the Complaints Management Procedure, which outlines the process of determination for 'unreasonable conduct' and advised respondent of the ability to have the decision reviewed internally or by the NSW Ombudsman.

Figure 3. List of Survey Questions

No	Question
1.	Name?
2.	Suburb?
3.	In what capacity are you primarily responding to this issue?
4.	Please let us know the name of the organisation?
5.	Please let us know your title in this organisation?
6.	Please let us know your level of support or otherwise for this proposal?
7.	Please provide any comments you would like to make on this issue
8.	Would you like to upload a submission?
9.	We are organizing a focus group to outline the changes made to our Draft Complaints Policy and Procedure and to gather feedback regarding these changes. If you're interested in participating and would like to share your feedback, please click here to express your interest in joining the focus group.
10.	Are you happy to have your name made available against your comment and/or submission in a publicly-available Council report?

Written Submissions received

No written submissions were received