

**DEALING WITH UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR**

<b>DIVISION</b>	<b>BUSINESS UNIT</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY AREA</b>
CEO	CEO	Regulatory Services

**OBJECTIVE**

This policy will guide staff on how to deal with unreasonable behaviour from customers.

**POLICY**

Council representatives are expected to treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times and to make every reasonable effort to address the needs of customers, even when they are being difficult. However, sometimes there are customers whose issues cannot be dealt with to their satisfaction.

**1. Customers who cannot be satisfied:**

The Chief Executive Officer can determine that a customer does not accept that the Shire is unable to assist them. Where a Supervisor/Manager is satisfied that every effort has been made by staff to address a customer's needs, the Chief Executive Officer may make a decision that there is no reasonable prospect of reaching a position where a particular customer is satisfied. In this instance, the Chief Executive Officer may decide to stop or limit responses to the customer in relation to the issue in question.

The Chief Executive Officer is to ensure that this is communicated in writing to the customer and that the customer is given the opportunity to make representations to the Council about the proposed course of action. The Chief Executive Officer will continue to monitor any further contact with the customer over the issue.

**2. Customers who make unreasonable demands:**

Customers who make unreasonable demands can result in a significant diversion of Shire staff resources away from other functions and staff requirements. They can also create an inequitable allocation of resources.

The Chief Executive Officer can determine to write to the customer requesting that they limit and focus their requests and that if the unreasonable requests recur, staff may not respond to such requests where in the opinion of the Chief Executive Officer no new specific, substantial and serious issues have been raised.

The Chief Executive Officer may also determine to limit responses to a fixed number of responses in a given period.

**3. Customers who consistently raise the same issue with different staff:**

If the Chief Executive Officer determines that a customer is constantly raising the same issue with different staff or elected members, the Chief Executive Officer can determine that only a nominated staff person will deal with the customer, that an appointment must

be made for any discussions required, or that all future contact with the Shire must be in writing.

#### **4. Customers who are rude, abusive or aggressive:**

The Shire holds a Zero Tolerance position on rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour.

Rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property or against a person.

#### **On the Telephone**

1. If, in the opinion of any staff member, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made in the telephone conversation, the staff member is to:
  - a) Warn the caller/customer that if the behaviour continues, the conversation will be terminated; and
  - b) Terminate the conversation if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.
2. Where a conversation is terminated, the staff member is to inform his/her Supervisor/Manager of the incident.
3. The staff member involved must make file notes of exactly what has happened and these should be recorded in the Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) and Site Docs.

#### **In Person**

1. At the Shire Office - If a staff member is dealing with a customer at the front desk and feel that they or other customers or staff may be placed in a dangerous situation, the staff member is to use the duress alarm. Assistance should be provided immediately by the first available Supervisor/Manager or the CEO, and another member of staff may call the police if required.
2. If, in the opinion of any staff member, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made in person at the front desk, the staff member is to:
  - c) Warn the customer that the Shire has a zero tolerance in regard to bad behaviour, and if the behaviour continues, customer service will be terminated; with the customer being asked to leave the premises and not return until such time that they are able to conduct themselves appropriately.
  - d) Terminate the conversation, excuse yourself or walk away if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.
3. Where customer service is terminated, and the customer refuses to leave the premises, the staff member is to inform the CEO (if available) or his/her Supervisor/Manager immediately of the incident.
4. The CEO, Manager or Supervisor should confirm with the customer that they have been advised to leave the premises and that they may return the following day and may be served if their behaviour is appropriate.

5. If required, the police should be contacted to remove the customer from the premises.
6. The staff member involved must make file notes of exactly what has happened and these should be recorded in the Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) and Site Docs.
7. At all other Shire Outstations/Workplaces - If a staff member is dealing with a customer and feels that they or other customers or staff may be placed in a dangerous situation, a staff member is to call the Shire Office front desk and ask them to inform the relevant Supervisor/Manager of the situation.
  - If the relevant Supervisor/Manager is not there, then any available Supervisor/Manager should be informed. That Supervisor/Manager should then go to the assistance of the staff member immediately.
  - Where assistance is required outside of normal working hours the Emergency Call Out Phone (Works and Services) should be called and if required, call the police immediately.

#### **5. Documentation and reporting:**

In all situations, staff are to document the incident and a record must be made and maintained in the Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) and the Work Health and Safety Management system – SiteDoc.

**6. Review: 2 years**

**7. Legislative and Associated Documents Relating to this Policy:**

This policy is complimented by the following documents and resources;

- Local Government Act 1995
- Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021
- Freedom of Information Act 1994
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003
- Shire of Plantagenet Customer Services Charter
- Dealing with Difficult Customers PM/135/15.'

**ADOPTED: 14 DECEMBER 2021**

**LAST REVIEWED: 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**