



CORRESPONDENCE COMMITMENT POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to state the correspondence commitment that can be expected when interacting with the Mornington Peninsula Shire (the Shire).

The policy aims to provide guidance for staff, Councillors and customers regarding enquiries made to the Shire and how they will be treated.

We recognise our community will at times require prompt actions and other times comprehensive research or a more detailed response may be required.

In every situation we will take the time to listen and understand your concerns so that we can respond appropriately.

The Shire's dual role as a service provider and a regulatory body can create situations where not all desired outcomes may be achievable, however the Shire is committed to providing customers with an accessible, fair and equitable mechanisms to access services, make service requests and obtain assistance.

This policy aligns with the Shire's Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017 through Goal 8 - **Innovative, responsive, value for money service delivery**. *To optimise value for ratepayers through efficient, effective and innovative service delivery.*

The Correspondence Commitment Policy is provided in detail overleaf.

This Policy shall be subject to review within 12 months of the next Council general election to be held in October 2016.

Correspondence Commitment Policy

TYPE	Council Policy
PURPOSE	The purpose of this policy is to state the correspondence commitment that can be expected when interacting with the Mornington Peninsula Shire (the Shire).
OBJECTIVES	The objective of this policy is to outline the Shire's service commitment in regards to enquiries made to by our community.
SCOPE	<p>This policy applies to all Shire staff.</p> <p>Councillors also play a role in our correspondence commitment by setting policy and strategy and referring requests for service to the organisation for appropriate action.</p> <p>For the purpose of this policy, service refers to all interactions between Council, our community and, stakeholders. These interactions come in a variety of forms including face to face, telephone, written or online contact.</p>
DEFINITIONS	<p>Correspondence refers to face to face, telephone, written or online contact.</p> <p>Service Standards refers to the manner, timeliness and standard that can be expected.</p> <p>Councillors refers to elected members to the Council of the Mornington Peninsula Shire in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.</p> <p>Customer includes residents, ratepayers, members of the public or groups, visitors and businesses of the Shire.</p> <p>Staff refers to all staff of the Shire whether employed full time, part time or casual, contractors, consultants, volunteers and workplace students.</p>
POLICY	<p>Our Service standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will treat customers courteously and respectfully • Listen to customers • Provide customers relevant information • Treat customers fairly • Respond in a timely manner • Treat all personal information confidentially • Respond to customers as individuals • Be punctual for meetings and appointments • All requests received from our customers will be recorded in our corporate systems.

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PROCEDURE

When a customer visits or telephones the Mornington Peninsula Shire

- We will attend the counter and answer the telephone promptly, courteously and assist you with your enquiry directly without unnecessary referrals or transfers.
- If we are unable to assist you personally with your enquiry we will provide you with the name of the person or business unit your request or enquiry will be referred to, or if that information is not readily available we will request the relevant person to contact you directly.
- Telephone calls will be returned at the first opportunity, however if information is not readily available we will contact you to discuss your expectations within 24 hours.

When a customer corresponds with us

- We will respond to you within twelve working days
- If a full response is not possible, you will receive acknowledgment, which will indicate the time the reply can be expected and the name and contact details of the officer who will be responding.

When a customer emails us through: customerservice@mornpen.vic.gov.au

- We will acknowledge receipt of your email within one working day
- We will respond to you within twelve working days
- If a full response is not possible, you will receive an initial response, which will indicate the time the reply can be expected and the name and contact details of the officer who will be responding.

Assistance

We utilise an interpreter service that can be requested either by telephone or face to face and any reasonable request for assistance will be considered.

Our expectations of you the customer

To help us to provide you our services we ask customers to:

- Treat Council officers with respect
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community
- Provide accurate and complete details
- Phone to make an appointment for a complex enquiry or a need to see an officer
- Phone the officer nominated on correspondence sent to the customer and quote the reference provided on the correspondence.

What if things go wrong?

- Where a customer is personally abusive or uses bad language, the communication may be terminated immediately by the officer
- If face to face, the officer may walk away

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PROCEDURE (CONT'D)

What if things go wrong? (Cont'd)

- If you telephone the officer may terminate the call
- If by email the address may be blocked or not responded to, a decision of this nature will be communicated in writing to the customer
- The Shire may determine to limit or cease communications or refer matters to the police in accordance with the Shire's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy. These decisions will be communicated in writing to the customer.

Complaints

Complaints will be managed in accordance with the Shire's Complaints Handling Policy. To assist Council in dealing with your complaint a customer should include the following, if relevant:

- Date, time and location of events
- Nature and description of complaint
- To whom the customer has spoken (names, position in the Council and dates)
- Copies of references to letter or documents relevant to the complaint
- State what the customer hopes to achieve as an outcome to the complaint.

While we will receive anonymous complaints, we will generally only act on them where the matter is considered to be serious and there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

Complaints made against Councillors

Complaints made against Councillors will be managed in accordance with the processes outlined within the Shire's Complaints Handling Policy.

Complaints Alleging Misconduct, Corrupt Conduct or Improper Behaviour (Protected Disclosure Act)

Complaints alleging serious misconduct, including corrupt conduct should be made and managed in accordance with the Shire's Protected Disclosure Act Guidelines.

Complaints Alleging Conflict of Interest or Improper Use of Position

All such complaints are to be referred immediately to the Manager Governance and Corporate Support.

Protection of Customer and Personal Information

We will take care to ensure that the reporting of complaints will not result in a customer experiencing any form of victimisation or unfair treatment as a result of the complaint and personal information will be protected in accordance with the requirements of the Information Privacy Act 2000 and the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

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RESPONSIBILITY	<p>Director – Sustainable Organisation For monitoring and maintain overall organisational performance.</p> <p>Manager – Governance and Corporate Support For ensuring the policy and procedures are implemented and maintained.</p> <p>Councillors For referring relevant correspondence to the organisation for appropriate action in a timely manner.</p> <p>Council Staff For delivering on the correspondence commitments of the Mornington Peninsula Shire.</p>
RELATED POLICIES/ STRATEGIES/PLANS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy Policy; • Access and Equity Policy; • Staff Code of Conduct Policy; • Protected Disclosure Act Guidelines; • Complaints Handling Policy; and • Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy.
RELATED LEGISLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Act 1989; • Protected Disclosure Act 2012; • Information Privacy Act 2000; • Freedom of Information Act 1982; and • Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.
REFERENCES	Nil.
AUTHOR	Governance Unit
APPROVED	<p>Executive (9 September 2014)</p> <p>Council (24 November 2014)</p>
REVIEW	This policy shall be subject to review within 12 months of the next Council general election to be held in October 2016.