HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL

Diamond Jubilee Lodge, Wood View Road, Hellesdon, Norwich NR6 5QB
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Customer Service Policy

1.0 Aims

- Hellesdon Parish Council is committed to the provision of quality services in accordance with the needs and expectations of its customers.
- The Council recognises the value of customer feedback and its contribution to the processes of policy formulation and service delivery.
- Customers are persons who contact us for any reason or are affected by anything we do.

2.0 Guiding Principles

When customers contact the Council, we will:

- Be helpful and courteous
- Be professional and positive
- Be well informed, so that we are able to help. If we are unable to assist at the point of contact, advise the customer as such.
- Be effective in listening and responding
- Be fair and support individual needs

3.0 Objectives

The Customer Service objectives for Hellesdon Parish Council are summarised below;

- We will respond to all telephone enquiries through the first point of contact where possible.
- We will respond to all email correspondence within 3 working days.
- We will respond to all letter correspondence within 10 working days of receipt.
- We will use plain language in all communications.
- We will contact customers where we cannot resolve a query straight away providing a named contact, phone number, email address and target date for response.
- We will keep customers informed if we cannot reply within the target timescale.
- We will provide details of our complaints policy to a customer if they are dissatisfied with our response.

4.0 Customers

Our customers are all the people we come into contact with in connection with the Council's work; this includes people who live in, work in or visit the area, and people acting on behalf of people who live in the area.

4.1 What Customers Want

Customers access Council services through various channels including digital (e.g. website, e-mail, social media) telephone, face to face, letter, etc. Whatever the channel, customers want accessible, efficient and responsive services and the Council must strive to meet these demands.

The Council will respond to the needs of customers in terms of access and recognise that one method will not suit everyone.

Customers want their dealings with the council to be efficient and that they receive their desired outcome. To meet this the Council must attempt to deal with customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

4.2 What We Expect from our Customers

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character when accessing Council services. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a customer contacting the Council.

The Council believes that all customers have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, the Council also believes that employees have the same rights. We, therefore, expect customers to be polite and courteous in all dealings with the Council.

The Council will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence; this includes any threat, abuse or harassment towards employees (and councillors acting on behalf of the council) on social media (e.g. Facebook) which will be reported to the police. Any threat of physical violence will always be reported to the police.

5.0 Contacting Hellesdon Parish Council

5.1 Customer Service and its Importance

Improving customer service is a key priority for the Council and means:

- Providing quality services in a friendly, efficient and helpful way; we will continually strive to improve services by ensuring excellent communication and a positive attitude towards customers
- Treating each person as an individual – respect for diversity and, in turn, having the flexibility to adapt behaviour and actions in a way that is appropriate for the individual
- Treating people with dignity, respect and courtesy
- Giving information about what is available and providing an explanation if a service is not available

5.2 General Principles when Dealing with Customers

When dealing with customers, whether using the telephone, digital services (e.g. email or, Facebook), face to face or via letter:

- Identify and address any specific requirements with sensitivity, tact and diplomacy
- Record customer contact details accurately
- Ensure that the nature of the customer's enquiry is understood clearly
- Resolve enquiries at first contact where possible

- Where enquiry cannot be resolved at first contact, agree a schedule with the customer for resolution and any interim progress reporting
- Keep the lines of communication open with customers and keep them informed

5.3 Digital

We will:

- Acknowledge digital correspondence (e.g. e-mails, website enquiries and Facebook) within 72 hours (Monday – Friday)
- Respond to digital correspondence as soon as possible but no longer than 10 working days of receipt
- E-mail 'Out of Office' messages will be enabled at times of absence giving return dates and alternative contact details

5.4 Telephone

We will:

- Greet the customer in a polite and courteous manner
- Give your full attention to the customer
- Take ownership of the call, resolving the customer's enquiry wherever possible
- When taking a call for a colleague, use an effective message taking system and make sure the customer is called back
- End the call with a thank you and confirm with the customer the outcome.

5.5 Face to Face Contact

This covers personal callers with or without appointments, contact with customers at events, meetings out and about and site visits. We will:

- When making appointments, give clear instructions about the location of the face to face contact
- Greet the customer in a polite and courteous manner
- Give your full attention to the customer
- Keep the customer informed of the length of time they are likely to wait to see the person they need, if that person is unavailable
- Offer an appointment where this may be more appropriate, responsive or efficient
- When a customer has specific requirements, find out what they need and aim to provide it
- When discussing personal information, always arrange to do so in a confidential environment

5.6 Written Communication

We will:

- Respond to all written communication within 10 working days of receipt
- There may be occasions when a full response cannot be given within the timescale. This is unavoidable but there is still a requirement to keep the customer informed by making contact or sending a holding response. This can give an expected date for a full response or give the reason why a full response cannot be given

- Ensure the presentation of all written correspondence is easy to understand (plain English), professional and accurate
- Include a contact name and telephone number, together with any other information needed to assist the customer

5.7 Compliments, concerns and complaints

We will:

- Be open to receiving feedback from customers and where appropriate use this feedback to improve services
- Pass comments and suggestions on to your manager if they may improve the service
- Ensure compliments are recorded and shared with colleagues
- Be aware of the Council's procedure for dealing with complaints
- Aim to resolve all concerns raised by customers immediately and informally wherever possible
- If informal resolution is not successful, tell the customer they can make a formal complaint, and help them to do so
- In the case of a serious complaint, ensure this is escalated.

How to contact us:

By telephone:	01603 301751
By e-mail:	contact@hellesdon-pc.gov.uk
In person:	The Council Office is open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4pm Diamond Jubilee Lodge Woodview Road Hellesdon NR6 5QB