



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

Background

This Customer Care Policy supports the Council's continuing commitment to improving services by making them more customer-focused and ensuring consistent standards are applied across the organisation.

The Policy

The policy's principles are: Forward Thinking, Respect, Professionalism, Pride and a One Team Council.

Application of this policy

This policy applies to all employees of Flitwick Town Council, regardless of the level of contact that they may have with customers during their normal duties. It also applies to internal and external customers alike.

Objectives of this Policy

The Council is committed to providing the highest level of customer care to all its customers. In order to achieve this, the policy has the following objectives:

- to establish consistent standards across the Council in contacts with customers.
- to clearly establish our commitment to customers.
- to set out the Council's complaints procedure.

Our Commitment to Customers

We will:

- treat you politely and with respect
- listen to you and take your views, wishes and needs seriously
- make sure that our employees are trained to give you the help and advice that you need
- use plain language and not use jargon
- not discriminate against you.

When answering the telephone, we will:

- aim to answer your call within a reasonable time frame.
- greet you politely and clearly
- tell you who you are speaking to and the name of the place you are calling

- put calls through to the right place first time
- take a message or give you the correct number to phone if we cannot transfer your call
- return your messages within one working day.

When dealing with your letters, we will:

- provide an acknowledgement where requested
- give you details of who is dealing with your enquiry

When dealing with your emails, text or other electronic communications, we will:

- provide an acknowledgement
- give you details of who is dealing with your enquiry

When you visit the Council building, we will:

- create an accessible environment that is welcoming, safe and friendly
- provide clear signs in the reception area
- provide self service facilities where appropriate
- make sure you are greeted within a reasonable time frame when arriving.

When we meet you face-to-face, we will:

- be on time
- wear or carry official identification
- arrange a time and place for you to discuss issues in private
- where appropriate, make other arrangements to see you if you cannot visit us
- provide follow up contact details, where appropriate.

Dealing with complaints,

Complaints will be dealt with in line with the Town Council Complaints Code attached to this document as **Appendix 1**.

We will keep customers informed and involved by:

- producing information about the Council and our services that is accurate, useful and up to date
- reviewing the Customer Care Standards every year
- using your feedback to help us make decisions

Our employees have a right to:

- work in a safe environment free from aggressive or threatening behaviour
- be treated politely

Customer Care Standards

There are some general principles of good customer care that should be applied in all contacts with customers:

- Any person taking a query, request or complaint from a customer should take responsibility for dealing with the contact, even if it is passing the information onto a colleague. Customers should be kept updated about the progress of their contact and when they can expect a response.
- Face-to-face contact ensures that you introduce and identify yourself. This is particularly important when visiting a customer rather than seeing them in Council offices. In these circumstances, identification should be shown.
- If an appointment is made, this should be kept. If an appointment time has to be changed or cancelled, an apology and explanation must be given to the customer.
- If a customer's query cannot be dealt with in the first instance, the person taking the initial query should explain why they cannot deal with it, and what action they will take to resolve it.
- Customers should not have to wait any longer than 10 minutes to be seen. If this happens an apology and an explanation should be given.
- Ringing telephones should be answered promptly and should ring out for no long periods of time. Everyone should be prepared to answer a ringing phone, even if only to take a message.
- Internal calls may be answered with a greeting and your name.
- If the person taking the initial query cannot answer the call, it may be necessary to connect it to another colleague. The customer should know who they are being transferred to and why they are being transferred. The colleague receiving the transfer should be updated so they do not have to repeat questions to the customer. If the query will take some time to answer, take the customer's name and number and ensure that you ring them back.
- All e-contacts should receive an acknowledgement within 1 working day. The acknowledgement will indicate when a full response can be expected. This may be an automated response.
- A full response to an, email or request via the website should take no longer than 2 working days. If this timescale cannot be met customers should receive an explanation, apology for the delay, and an indication as to how long a full response is expected to take.
- Everyone should use the standard email signature to ensure that contact details are easily found: <Your Name> <Job Title> Flitwick Town Council <Telephone number>
- Written contacts, a full response to a letter should take no longer than 7 working days. If this cannot be made, explain and apologise to the customer and indicate how long a full response is expected to take.