

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Applicable to:	All Employees	Policy Number:	MDC001
Issued by:	Chief Executive	Last Approved:	July 2024
Contact Person:	Customer Services Manager	Review Date:	July 2029

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state how Masterton District Council (MDC) will ensure that:

- compliments are recorded and monitored; and
- complaints are managed and resolved in a fair and timely manner.

Scope

This policy applies to all compliments and complaints received by MDC. The following will not be treated as a compliment or complaint under this policy:

- service requests;
- requests for information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 or the Privacy Act 2020;
- feedback received as part of any formal consultation process;
- complaints made by one staff member against another;
- allegations against a contractor or staff member of fraud or any other form of serious misconduct; or
- complaints where specific legislation or other legal obligations (e.g. contracts) exist that require the matter to be managed in a particular manner.

Complaints against the Mayor and elected members are covered by the Code of Conduct for Elected Members which outlines the procedure for handling these complaints.

Statement of Commitment

MDC is committed to building and maintaining a reputation for providing superb service and excellent community support. We acknowledge that effective management of compliments and complaints provides an opportunity to continuously improve our services.

MDC will provide a simple, open, and effective compliments and complaints process. To achieve this, MDC will:

- publicise the Compliments and Complaints Policy to support community awareness and understanding of the process

- ensure compliments are recorded promptly and regularly monitored and reported
- ensure complaints are investigated objectively and promptly
- take all appropriate action to remedy a complaint
- communicate the outcome of any complaint investigation to all parties, in a way that is easy to understand
- monitor the nature and outcome of complaints received to identify improvements to the services we provide.

Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction with a MDC decision, process, outcome, employee or contractor action, or quality of service.

Compliment: An expression of satisfaction, thanks or appreciation for something MDC or an employee of contractor has done.

Service Request: Any notification received from a customer, client, contractor or member of the public regarding a fault, a breakdown in service, or investigation of issues or concerns.

Making a compliment or complaint

All compliments and complaints must include contact details and a description of the compliment or complaint, unless submitted anonymously (see below). Compliments and complaints will be accepted by means of:

- online via our website
- post to Masterton District Council, Freepost 112477, PO Box 444, Masterton 5840
- in person or hand delivered in writing to our Customer Service Centre, 161 Queen Street, Masterton
- email
- phone (06) 370 6300.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints may be investigated at the discretion of the Chief Executive, depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint.

Accepted compliment and complaint formats and languages

MDC will accept compliments and complaints that are:

- written or spoken in te reo Māori (subject to prior arrangement if compliment / complaint to be presented in person)
- written or spoken in English

- New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) (subject to prior arrangement if compliment / complaint to be presented in person).

MDC can provide assistance for people who need help to make a compliment or complaint.

We do not accept compliments or complaints via social media platforms.

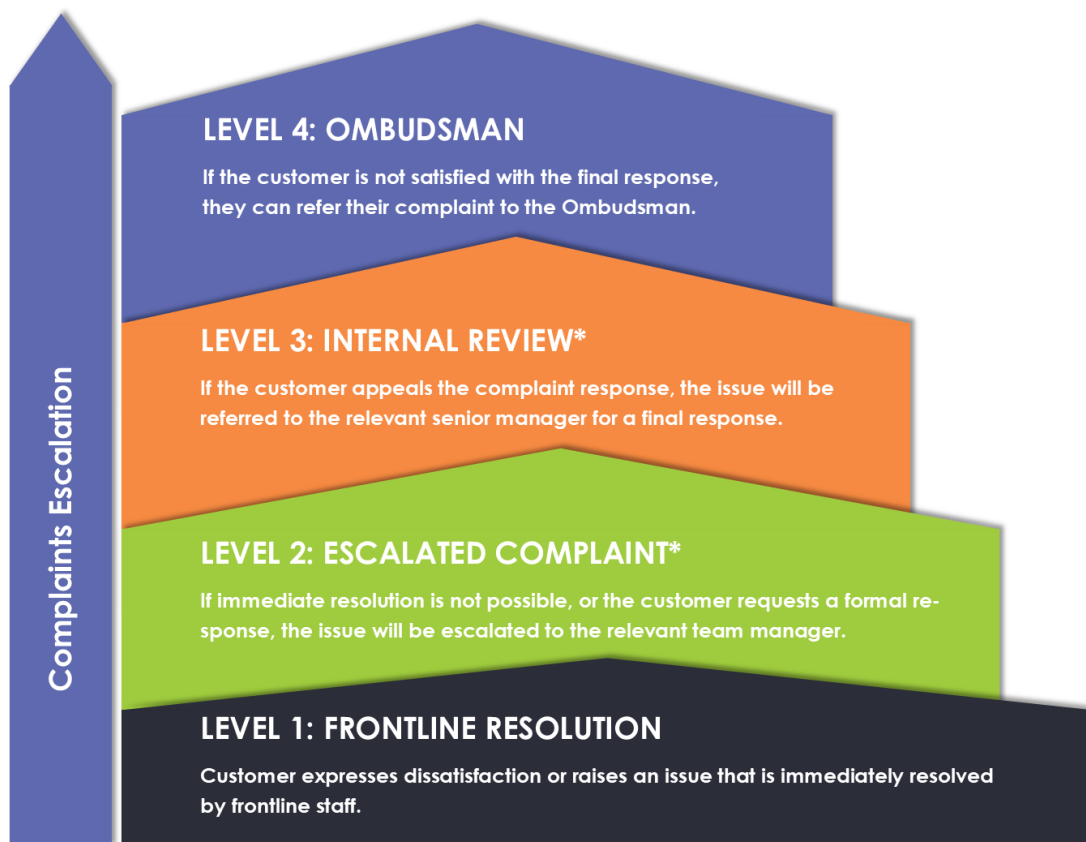
Managing Compliments

Compliments can be submitted in the accepted formats outlined above but will only be recorded in MDC’s compliments management system if they contain enough information to clearly identify what was valued and liked by the person. Refer to Appendix A: Recording Compliments.

MDC will acknowledge compliments and share them with the relevant staff member/s and their manager.

Complaints Management and Escalation Framework

MDC will manage and escalate complaints in accordance with the framework illustrated below.



* Covered by this Policy

Level 1: Frontline Resolution

Simple complaints that can be easily remedied and where a formal response is not requested will be managed by the employee who receives the complaint. Issues resolved at the first point of contact will not be recorded as a complaint in MDC's management system.

Level 2: Escalated Complaint

Any complaint that cannot be resolved immediately, or where the customer requests a formal response, will be escalated and recorded as a complaint in MDC's management system. Level 2 complaints will be escalated to the relevant team manager for resolution. A complaint about a manager shall be dealt with by the Executive Leadership Team. If the complaint is particularly complex or high risk, the relevant senior manager must be advised. Complaints will be resolved in accordance with the timeframes stated in this policy.

Level 3: Internal Review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive from MDC, they may appeal. Appeals to responses will be managed by the Executive Leadership Team. The reviewer will consider the response and determine if the matter requires further investigation. The complainant will be formally advised of this decision and any further outcomes. The timeframes below apply.

Level 4: Ombudsman

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their appeal, the complainant will be advised of their right to escalate the complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Complaints about the Chief Executive

Any complaint about the Chief Executive will be referred to the Mayor, who will determine the appropriate approach to investigate and resolve the matter. This may differ to the timeframes stated in this policy. If this is the case, the complainant will be advised.

Complaint Timeframes

As outlined in the Complaints Management and Escalation Framework, complaints that can be easily managed are responded to as soon as possible, however if the complaint is escalated, they will be:

- acknowledged within two working days of receipt; and
- issued a response within 15 working days of receipt.

If additional time is required to provide a response, the complainant will be advised before the expiry of the 15 working day deadline and will be kept informed of progress until the complaint is resolved. If the complaint response timeframe extends over 30 working days from receipt the relevant Executive Leadership Team member must be informed.

Complaint Content Conditions

MDC reserves the right to not respond to complaints, in part or in full, that contain content that is determined to be of the following nature:

1. Containing offensive language.
2. Is discriminatory, defamatory, or derogatory.
3. Containing personal threats or harassment of Council or staff members.
4. Persistently makes the same complaint, despite it having been fully investigated under this procedure, or persist in seeking an unrealistic outcome.
5. Is vexatious, aggressive, or intimidating. This means the complaint is one being pressed specifically to cause harassment, annoyance, frustration, worry, or bring financial cost.

If staff consider that the complainant's behaviour or language is unacceptable, they should advise the complainant of this, their reasons for that evaluation, and that the investigation process will be suspended.

The investigation will recommence on receipt of an undertaking from the complainant that they will suitably modify their behaviour or language.

Staff should record any reasons for declining or stopping an investigation within the complaints management system.

Complainants will not be denied the opportunity to make genuine complaints. Where there is uncertainty, it should be reviewed by the relevant manager.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be dealt with sensitively, keeping the complaint confidential as far as possible, with the complaint and information only disclosed if necessary to properly review the matter of concern and in accordance with requirements of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) and Privacy Act 2020.

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act and the Privacy Act

Under the LGOIMA, MDC is committed to maintaining the availability to the public of official information held by local authorities, and to promote the open and public transaction of business at meetings of local authorities. Information about compliments and complaints may be requested under the LGOIMA and any disclosure made in accordance with that Act and the Privacy Act 2020.

Recording and Reporting

Escalated compliments and complaints will be recorded by Customer Services in the compliments and complaints management system.

Information about compliments and complaints will be reported to Council at least every six-months.

Responsibilities

All employees are responsible for being familiar with this policy and participating in any training on the processes for recording compliments and responding to complaints.

Customer Services Manager is responsible for managing MDC's compliments and complaints management system.

Customer Services Specialists are responsible for:

- logging compliments and complaints in the compliments and complaints management system
- acknowledging the complaint within 2 working days of receipt.

All managers are responsible for:

- ensuring compliments and complaints are forwarded to a Customer Service Specialist for logging in the compliments and complaints management system
- sharing compliments with their team/the person concerned
- leading the investigation and response to complaints received in relation to their area of responsibility
- notifying the relevant Executive Leadership Team member of any complaints that are particularly complex or high risk
- communicating with the Customer Services Manager to ensure sufficient correspondence with the complainant has been made
- following timeframes set out in this policy.

Executive Leadership Team members are responsible for:

- notifying the Chief Executive of any complaints that are particularly complex or high risk
- leading the investigation and response to Level 3 appeals
- leading the investigation and response to complaints about managers.

Chief Executive is responsible for:

- reviewing responses to complex or high-risk complaints, where escalated by the relevant Executive Leadership Team member.
- leading the investigation and response to complaints about ELT members.

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every five years.

References

[Elected Member Code of Conduct](#)

[Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987](#)

[Privacy Act 2020](#)

Related Documents

[Our Tikanga](#)

[Ombudsman Website - Tips for resolving a complaint with a government agency](#)

[Ombudsman Website - Effective Complaint Handling](#)

[Social Media Policy](#)

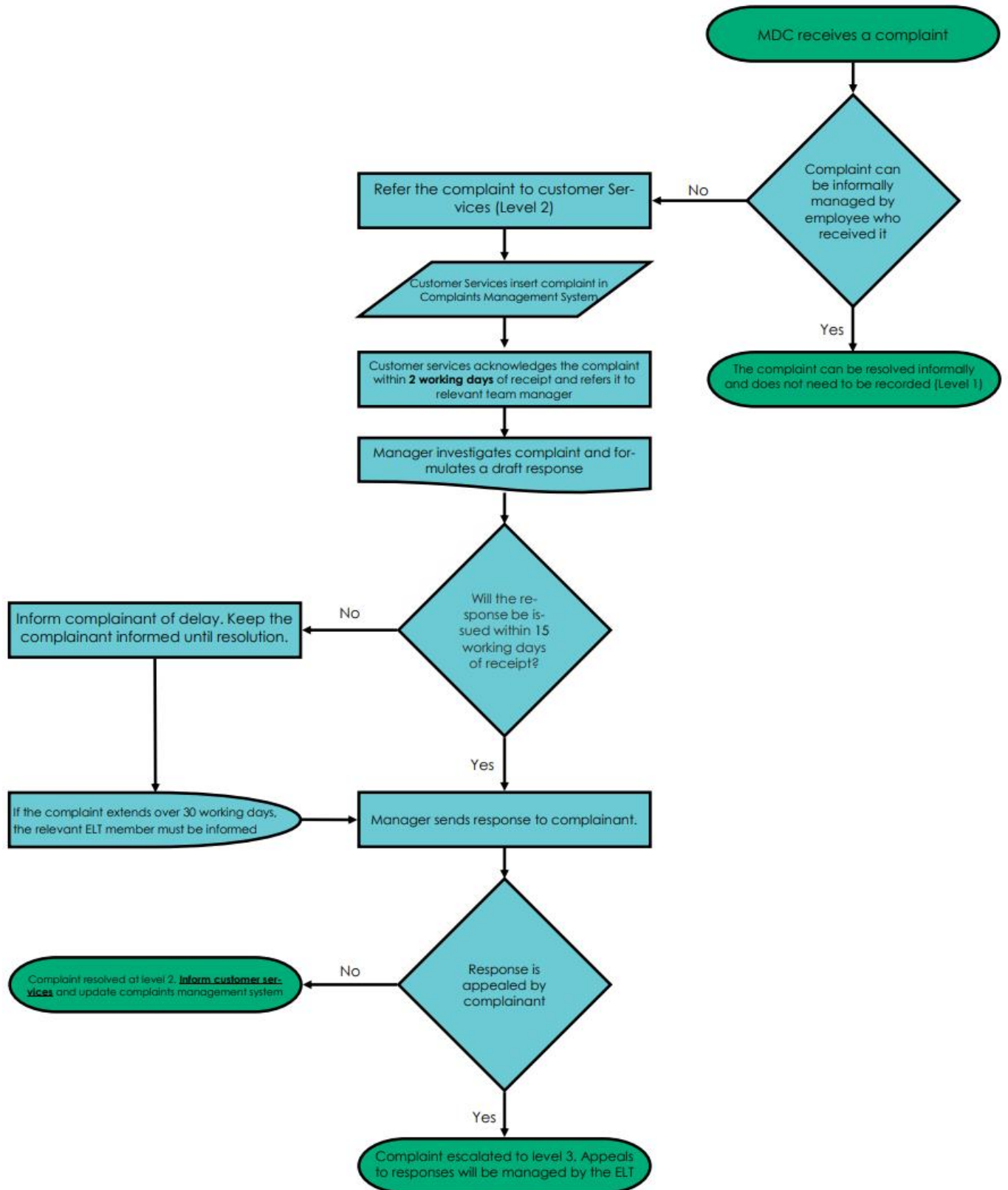
[Submission Policy](#)

Version Control

Version	Date	Summary of Amendments	Approved By
1	2014	New policy	Senior Management Team
2	4/3/2019	Amended to clarify policy scope, distinction between minor and formal complaints, and the complaints process.	Senior Leadership Team
3	2024	Amended to include accepted compliments and complaints methods formats, and content requirements. Minor additional amendments to ensure the policy is up to date.	Executive Leadership Team

Appendices

Appendix A: Complaints Flowchart



Appendix B: Compliments Flowchart

