



Section: Administration
Policy Title: Service Request and Complaint Handling Policy
Policy No.: A09-CORP-003
Approved By: Council
Effective Date: 2024-09-05
Revised Date:

SERVICE REQUEST AND COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. The Township of Malahide (“Township”) is committed to delivering high-quality services and maintaining a constructive relationship with all stakeholders, including customers, contractors, and employees. We recognize the importance of feedback, including complaints, which provide valuable insights into the satisfaction of our service recipients and the discovery of areas where our services can be improved.
- 1.2. This policy provides the public with an avenue for submitting service requests and complaints.
- 1.3. This policy will help the Township continue to provide exceptional service to the public and contribute to the continuous improvement of operations.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1. Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all service requests and complaints are handled systematically and promptly, with the aim of resolving any issues in a timely and satisfactory manner.

2.2. Scope:

This policy applies to all municipal staff.

The following types of Complaints will not be investigated in accordance with this Policy and include but are not limited to:

- Criticisms or anonymous complaints.
- Complaints regarding a decision or recommendation of Council or a Committee of Council.

- Complaints regarding whether a meeting of Council was appropriately held in accordance with the Closed Meeting provisions outlines in the Municipal Act, 2001 (closed meeting complaints are governed by the Ontario Ombudsman).
- Complaints about Members of Council (as they are governed by the Council Code of Conduct and investigated by the Integrity Commissioner).
- Complaints which involve ongoing litigation.
- Internal employee complaints.
- Frivolous, Vexatious, or unreasonable complaints/requests (see Policy A09-CORP-004).
- Issues that have statutory review and appeal processes including but not limited to Freedom of Information Requests, development charges levies, land use planning, by-law and building notices, orders, and appeals.
- Outside boards and agencies, for example, EECC Board, Police Services.
- Requests to change a by-law.
- Suggestions.
- Civil matters (e.g., disputes between neighbours).

3. DEFINITIONS

Informal Complaint means a casual or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities, services, or programs provided by the Township or a person or body on behalf of the Township. Typically, communicated directly to the employee providing the service, without following a specific structure.

Formal Complaint means a written or official statement of dissatisfaction. Typically, filed when all other attempts to resolve a complaint have failed. It follows a structured process and is documented within the Township’s complaint management system.

Comparison:

| Aspect | Informal Complaint | Formal Complaint |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Communication | Verbal or casual written | Written and official |
| Process | Unstructured, quick-handling | Structured, follows company protocols |
| Documentation | Minimal or none | Detailed records maintained |
| Resolution | Quick and straightforward | Thorough investigation may take longer |
| Escalation | Usually resolved by front-line staff and/or Manager | Involves CAO |
| Examples | Mentioning dissatisfaction to a staff member | Submitting a formal letter |

Feedback means an opinion or comment about a program, facility, service, or employee.

Complainant means a customer who is submitting a Complaint. Any customer who uses or is affected by Township services can make a Complaint including residents, visitors, businesses, and community groups.

Council means Township of Malahide Council as a whole.

Employee means all full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, students, volunteers, and staff hired on a contract basis for a defined period of time, of the Township.

CAO means Chief Administrative Officer.

Ombudsman means the Ombudsman of Ontario, or the Ombudsman appointed by Council in accordance with Section 223.13 (1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c 25.

Personal Information means personal information as defined in Section 2(1) of the Municipal Freedom of Information Protection of Privacy Act including,

- a) information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual.
- b) information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved.
- c) any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual.
- d) the address, telephone number, fingerprints, or blood type of the individual.
- e) the personal opinions or views of the individual except if they relate to another individual.
- f) correspondence sent to an institution by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature and replies to that correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence.
- g) the views or opinions of another individual about the individual; and,
- h) the individual's name if it appears with other Personal Information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other Personal Information about the individual.

Service Request means a request submitted to the Township for a specific service or to notify the Township that a service was not provided in time.

4. EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS

The following are some examples of **Complaints** covered by this policy:

- Complaints about receiving poor customer service.
- Complaints about the quality of the service provided.
- Timeliness in responding to a complaint.
- Concerns regarding a staff member that appears to be in contravention of:
 - Code of Conduct.
 - Established policies and procedures of the Township.
 - Appropriate legislation.

- Inherently unethical (code of ethics)

The following are some examples of **Service Requests** covered by this policy:

- Mailbox Repair
- Snow Removal
- Road Maintenance Concern
- Water/Sewer Related
- Drainage Related

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1. Accessibility:

Information about how to file a service request or a complaint should be available to all stakeholders without any barriers. Service requests and complaints can be lodged through various channels such as email, telephone, in-person, or through forms on our website.

5.2. Transparency:

The process for handling complaints will be transparent from the submission to the resolution stage. Complainants will be kept informed of the progress of their complaints and the outcomes achieved.

5.3. Accountability:

Employees at all levels are responsible for managing and resolving complaints in accordance with this policy.

5.4. Impartiality:

Every complaint will be addressed fairly and objectively, without bias. Making a complaint will not negatively affect future dealings with the Township. Customers will not be discriminated against during the investigation or because of a complaint. Staff about whom a complaint is launched will be treated fairly.

5.5. Confidentiality:

Protecting the privacy of all parties is of utmost importance. Information will be collected, used, and disclosed in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

5.6. Timeliness:

Service requests are submitted to the appropriate department for processing and are processed on a priority basis at the discretion of the Township.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged within three (3) business days of receipt, and efforts will be made to resolve complaints within 30 business days.

5.7. Continuous Improvement

Complaints will be considered as opportunities to evaluate programs and services for improvement and will record lessons learned.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. Staff are responsible for directing service requests and unresolved informal complaints to the appropriate Manager. The appropriate department will monitor the status of requests and complaints and ensure responses are in accordance with the service standards.
- 6.2. Customers are to recognize the difference between a service request and a complaint. Customers are also requested to acknowledge that the Township must consider the needs of the whole community. They are to provide honest and respectful communication with the goal of improving services.
- 6.3. Staff are to have knowledge and understanding of the purpose of receiving service requests and complaints, the process through which a request and complaint can be made and the service standards that apply.
- 6.4. Managers and Directors are responsible for investigating and responding to informal complaints about services provided by their respective departments. Complaints about staff are to be processed by the Human Resources Manager in collaboration with the CAO.

7. PROCESS

7.1. Complaints Resolution Attempt

7.1.1. Informal Complaints

Whenever possible, customers are encouraged to work together with Township staff to address and resolve their concerns.

Informal Complaint Process:

1. Initial Contact: The customer can contact the Township's customer service representative through channels identified in our Customer Service Policy or if the matter already involves a staff member, continue contact with that employee.
2. The staff member will actively listen to the customer's complaint and assess whether the issue can be resolved quickly within their scope of authority.
3. If unresolved, the staff member shall escalate the complaint following the escalation process described in A09-CORP-002 Customer Service Policy.

The Employee is responsible for trying to resolve issues or concerns before they become formal complaints and identify opportunities to improve Township Services.

7.1.2. Formal Complaints

Should a resolution not be made during the informal process, formal complaints can be submitted through the following channels:

1. Online at www.malahide.ca – File Formal Complaint
2. By completing the [Complaint Form](#) and submit online or by:
 - Email at info@malahide.ca
 - By mail to: Township of Malahide, 87 John Street South, Aylmer, ON, N5H 2C3
 - In person at: 87 John Street South, Aylmer, ON, N5H 2C3
 - By fax to 519-773-5334

In order to submit a formal complaint to the Township, Complainants are required to provide as much detail as possible including:

- Contact Information – name, address, phone number, email (anonymous complaints will not be accepted).
- Details of the complaint
- Location
- Date/Time
- Name of any individuals or staff involved.
- Resolution being sought.

7.2. Submitting a Service Request Form

Service Requests can be submitted through the following channels:

1. Online at www.malahide.ca – Service Request Portal.
2. By completing the [Service Request Form](#) and submitting by:
 - By email to info@malahide.ca
 - By mail to: Township of Malahide, 87 John Street South, Aylmer, ON, N5H 2C3
 - In person at: 87 John Street South, Aylmer, ON, N5H 2C3
 - By phone: 519-773-5344
 - By fax to 519-773-5334

8. UPON RECEIPT OF FORMAL COMPLAINT

8.1. The CAO shall acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within three (3) days of receiving the complaint form.

8.2. The CAO shall review the issues identified by the Complainant and in doing so may:

- a) Review relevant municipal and provincial legislation.
- b) Review the Township's relevant policies and procedures.
- c) Review any existing file documents.
- d) Interview Employee(s) or member(s) of the public involved in the complaint.
- e) Identify actions that may be taken to address the complaint or improve Township operations; or
- f) Take other actions the CAO deems expedient to resolving the matter.

- 8.3. Upon receipt of a complaint, and where the CAO deems it appropriate, the CAO may delegate the authority to investigate and respond to a Complaint to another Employee, e.g., the Human Resources Department.
- 8.4. The CAO may not delegate the authority to investigate a complaint to an Employee who is or may be named in the complaint.
- 8.5. The CAO or delegate shall maintain a file of the complaint in compliance with the Township's records retention by-law.

9. DECISION

- 9.1. Within thirty (30) calendar days of the CAO receipt of a formal complaint, a response shall be provided in writing to the Complainant. The response shall include:
 - a) Whether the complaint was substantiated.
 - b) If the complaint was not substantiated, the reason(s) for their decision; and,
 - c) Any actions the Township has or will take as a result of the complaint.
- 9.2. If the CAO or delegate is unable to provide a response within thirty (30) days of receipt, they shall notify the Complainant of the delay and provide an estimate of when a response will be provided.

10. COMPLAINT APPEAL PROCESS

- 10.1. There is no additional appeal process at the municipal level. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the results of the investigation or the process, they may contact the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman. The Ontario Ombudsman has the authority to look at how the issue was handled by the Township, the steps taken, and the outcome. The Ombudsman has the authority to consider and make recommendations as to whether the process was fair, transparent, and in accordance with applicable policies and by-laws of the Township.

11. GENERAL

- 11.1. Copies of all correspondence and notices shall be retained in the complaint file.
- 11.2. Where appropriate, copies of correspondence shall be placed in the Employee's HR (Human Resources) file subject to the complaint.
- 11.3. Communications with a Complainant shall not provide details of disciplinary measures imposed on any Employee.
- 11.4. The CAO or their delegate shall make dated records of any communication and attempted contacts with the Complainant(s).

12. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

12.1. Non-compliance with the Township Service Request and Complaint Handling Policy may result in the complaint being filed with the Ontario Ombudsman for investigation.

12.2. Consequence to be commensurate with the severity of non-compliance.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

13.1. This policy is reviewed by the Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk or designated at least every Council Term (4 years) to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legislation and current business processes or as required based on legislative changes.

13.2. The Manager of Legislative Services/Clerk is authorized to make minor or housekeeping amendments to this Policy as required.

14. REFERENCES

A09-CORP-002 Customer Service Policy

A09-CORP-004 Frivolous, Vexatious, or Unreasonable Complaints/Requests Policy

HRM C-3.1 Employee Code of Conduct

Council Code of Conduct

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)