

Complaint Handling Policy

Have Your Say Feedback



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Community consultation on the Draft Complaint Handling Policy was undertaken through the City's Have Your Say platform between 3 and 31 July 2026. The consultation invited community members to review the draft policy and provide feedback on its clarity, fairness, accessibility and the proposed complaint handling principles. A total of 12 submissions were received.

Overall, respondents were supportive of the draft policy and the principles underpinning the City's approach to complaint handling. Most participants indicated that the policy was easy to understand, with 67% rating it as either "easy" or "very easy" to understand.

Feedback demonstrated strong support for the proposed complaint handling commitments. Respondents rated the principles of Commitment and Transparency most highly, with all respondents giving these principles the highest rating. The principles of Accessibility, Accountability and Continuous Improvement also received very strong support, each achieving average ratings above 4.9 out of 5. Respondents similarly indicated strong confidence in the policy's approach to Objectivity and Fairness and Privacy.

While feedback was generally positive, some respondents identified opportunities to further improve the policy's readability and usability. Common suggestions focused on simplifying language, increasing clarity around the complaints process, and ensuring the policy remains accessible to a broad range of community members.

The consultation results indicate broad community support for the Draft Complaint Handling Policy and its commitment to delivering a complaints process that is transparent, accessible, fair and accountable. Feedback received through the engagement process has been considered in finalising the policy for Council's consideration.

HOW WE ENGAGED

WHAT DID WE DO?

The community was invited to provide feedback through a 28-day consultation period hosted on the City's Have Your Say (HYS) page that has more than 3500 subscribers. The project was featured in the quarterly Have Your Say newsletter which is distributed to 4000 subscribers. To maximise awareness and participation, the consultation was promoted on the City of Greater Geelong's Facebook page and an article was published in City News article on Friday 24 July.



28 DAYS

of engagement
via the HYS Page



12

Number of people to leave
feedback



3

People following
the project

DATA METHODOLOGY

This engagement was open to all members of the public for their contribution.

COMMUNICATIONS

The draft Complaint Handling Policy was promoted broadly across the City’s channels and included in the community engagement section of City News on 24 July 2026.

SOCIAL MEDIA



3,752
Facebook Reach.

229
Instagram Reach

1198
LinkedIn Reach

13
Facebook Interactions

19
Instagram Interactions

768
LinkedIn Interactions



1
Feature in City News sent to 2800+ subscribers

WHO WE ENGAGED WITH

PARTICIPATION

From 3 – 31 July 2026, 127 people visited the engagement page, with 12 community members submitting feedback. The number of page visits and views has been illustrated below:

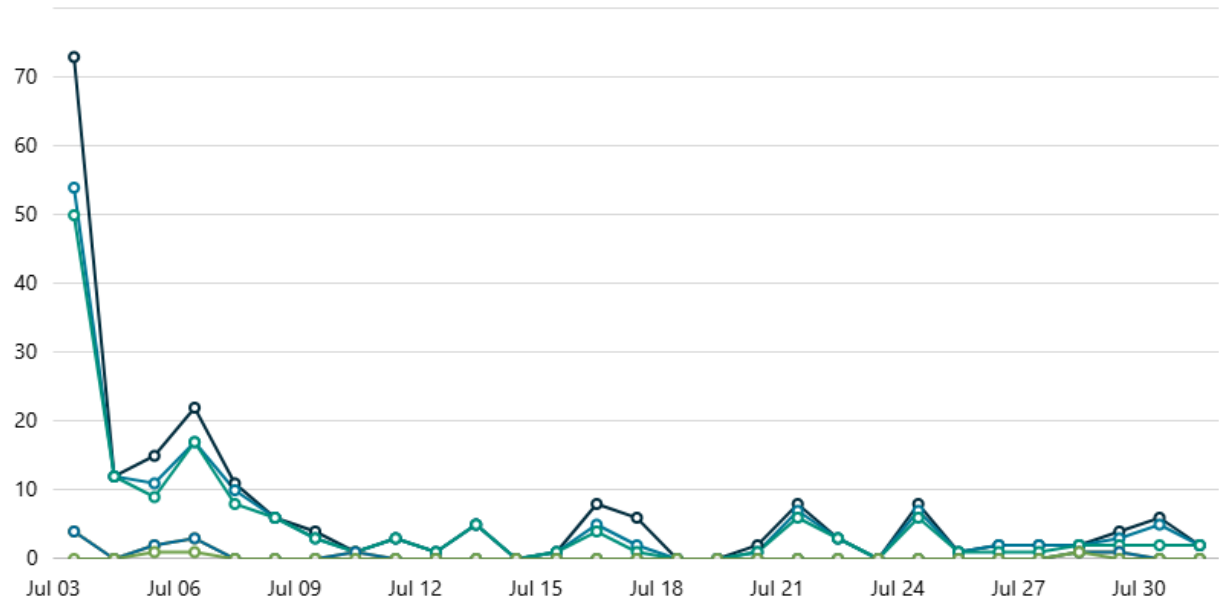


Figure 1: Page Visits & Views

All 12 community members completed the closed and open-ended questions as part of the consultation process, with valuable feedback being left in the open-ended comments sections.

The community were invited to share some demographic data with us, primarily through our HYS page. The following is a snapshot of these people.

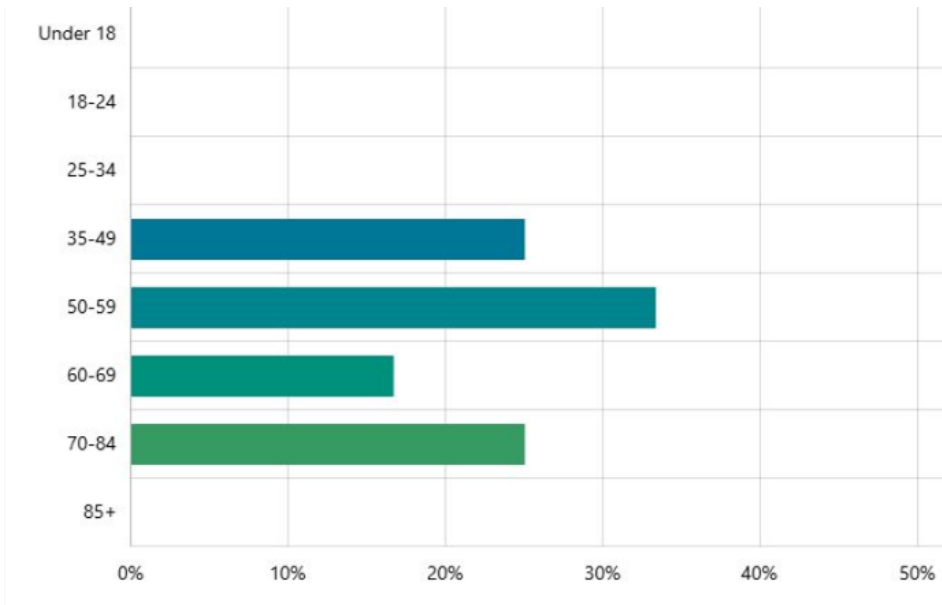


Figure 2: Age

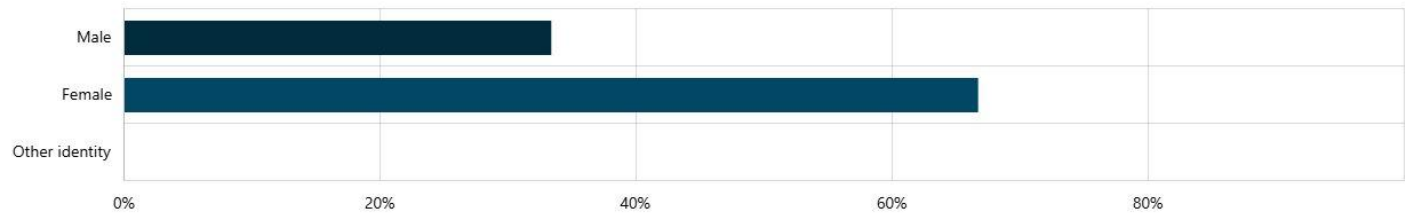


Figure 3: Gender

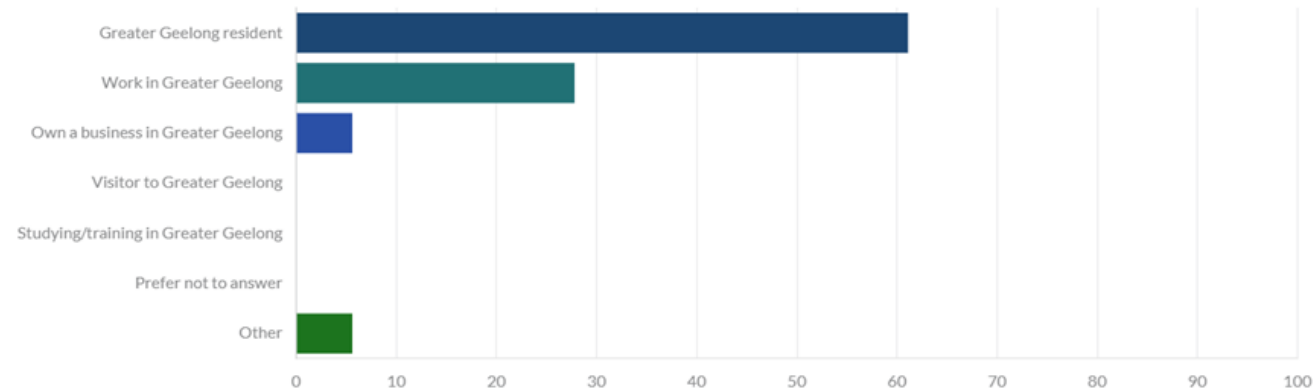


Figure 4: Which best describes you.

WHAT WE HEARD

THE FEEDBACK

The consultation demonstrated broad support for the intent and guiding principles of the Draft Complaint Handling Policy while identifying opportunities to improve clarity, accessibility and process transparency. Community feedback primarily focused on opportunities to improve how the policy is presented and implemented rather than its overall direction.

Respondents requested a simpler and more accessible document, including the use of plain English, visual process maps and alternative formats to support people with varying accessibility needs. Feedback also highlighted the importance of clear communication throughout the complaint process, including acknowledgement of complaints, regular progress updates and transparent explanations of decisions and outcomes.

A number of submissions sought stronger procedural safeguards, particularly around review processes, management of unreasonable complainant conduct, accountability mechanisms and publication of complaint performance information. Participants also emphasised the importance of maintaining opportunities for direct engagement and respectful dialogue between Council and community members.

OVERALL KEY FINDINGS

Community members were invited to rank the useability of the draft policy to determine its suitability and accessibility.

The data told us:

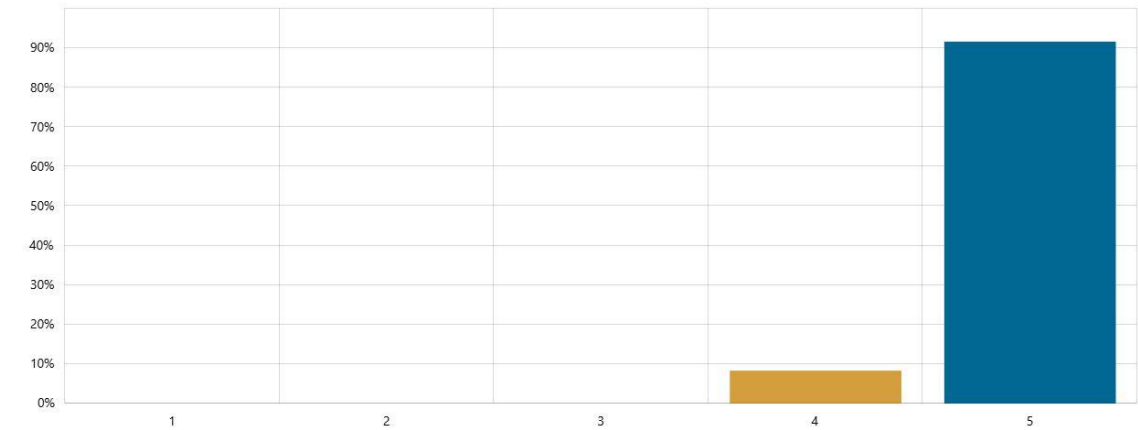
- Respondents provided mixed views regarding **fairness** and **accessibility**, with average ratings of just over 3 out of 5 for both measures. Feedback identified opportunities to improve accessibility and clarity through plain language, alternative formats and clearer process information.
- 66% of respondents found the policy to be **Very Easy** or **Easy** to understand

Community members were then invited to rank the importance of seven proposed Guiding Principles to be included in the revised policy. The feedback from respondents was as follows:

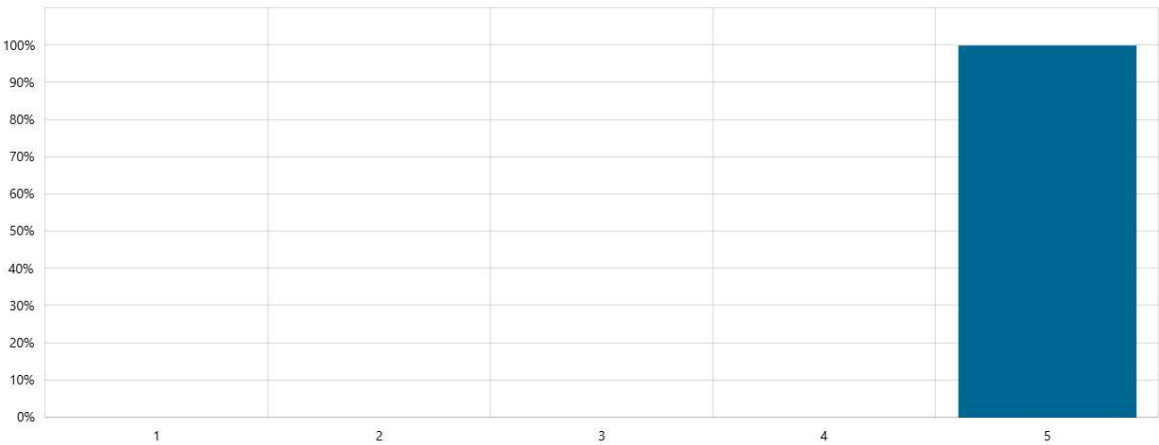
1. **Commitment - We are committed to receiving and resolving complaints. We value complaints and recognise they are part of our core business, serving our community and improving our services.**



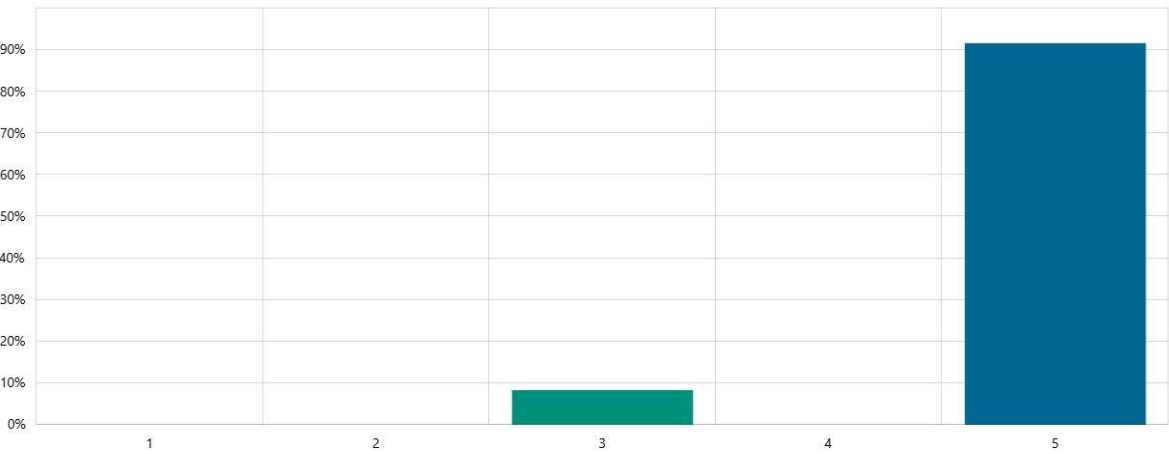
2. Accessibility - All people can easily complain, and staff actively assist them to navigate the complaints process.



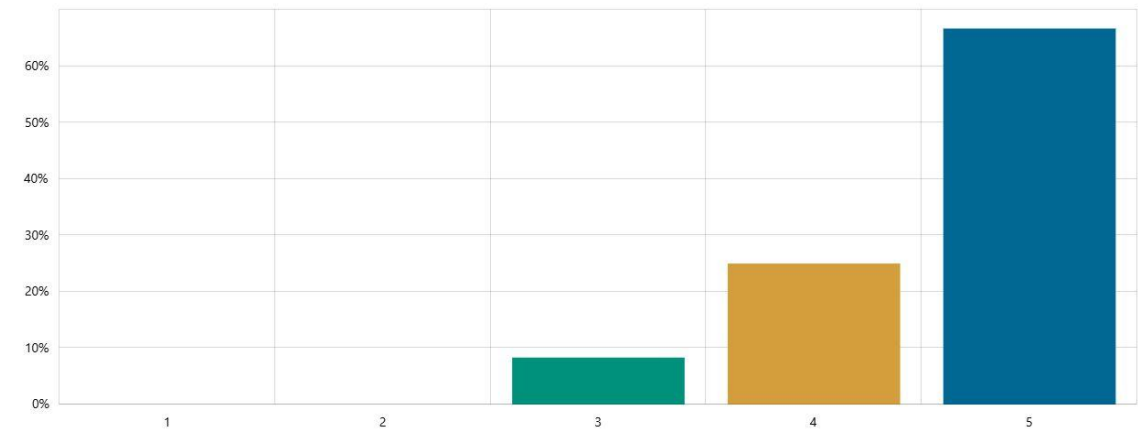
3. Transparency - We make it clear how to complain, where to complain and how the complaint will be handled. The steps taken to respond to a complaint are recorded and will stand up to scrutiny.



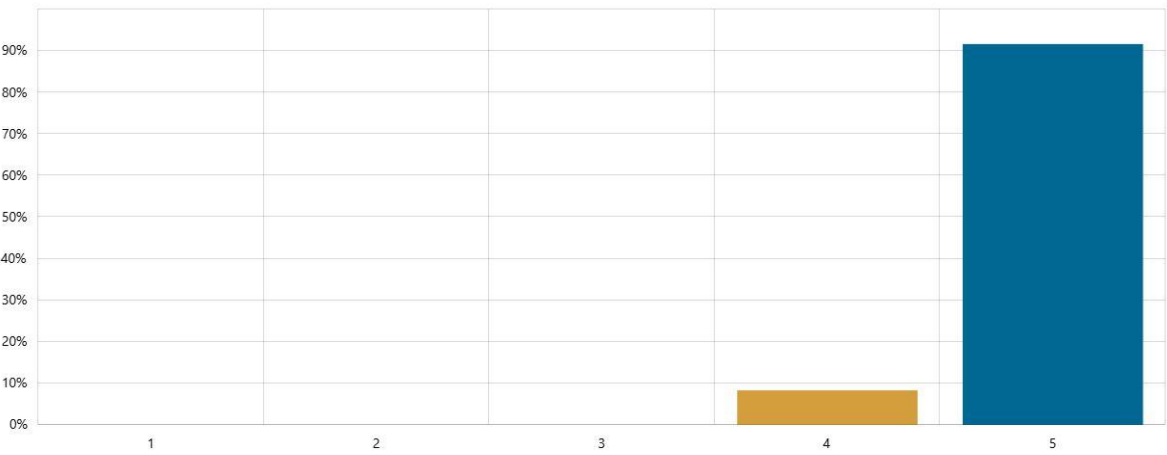
4. Objectivity and fairness - Complaints are dealt with courteously, impartially, within established timeframes and are assessed on merit.



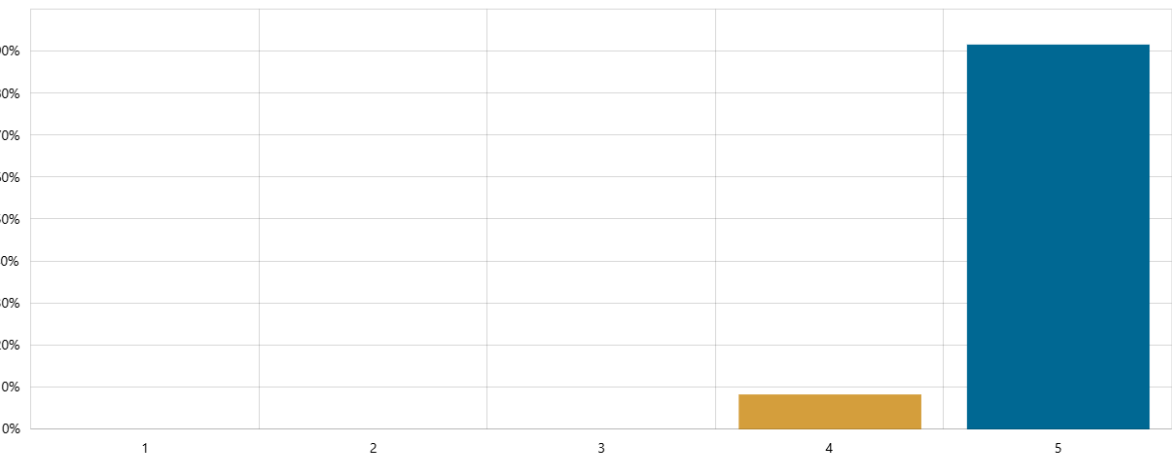
5. **Privacy - Complaint information is handled according to privacy laws and other relevant legislation. We provide clear information about how we handle personal information. Complaint data is de-identified if reported on more widely.**



6. **Accountability - We are accountable internally and externally for our decision making and complaint handling. We provide reasons for decisions and ensure we are open to appropriate review processes.**



7. **Continuous improvement - Acting on, learning from, and using complaint data helps us identify opportunities for improvement.**



OVERARCHING THEMES

1. Improve clarity and ease of understanding

The most common theme was a desire for simpler, more user-friendly content. Respondents identified opportunities to improve readability through plain language, increasing font size and reducing dense blocks of text. Several respondents suggested the inclusion of summary tables, process maps and flowcharts to assist customers in understanding the complaint process.

2. Greater transparency around processes and timeframes

Many respondents sought clearer information about what happens after a complaint is lodged. Feedback included requests for acknowledgement timeframes, regular progress updates, defined escalation pathways, information about who conducts reviews and clearer explanations when complaints cannot be progressed. Several respondents expressed concern that the proposed 28-business-day timeframes may be too long without interim communication updates.

3. Accessibility and inclusion

Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring the complaints process is accessible to all community members. Suggestions included providing information in alternative formats, making communication options available beyond email, improving support for people with vision impairment, and ensuring review processes can be accessed without creating unnecessary barriers.

4. Fairness, accountability and procedural governance

A number of submissions focused on ensuring the policy provides clear protections and accountability measures for all parties. Respondents suggested strengthening provisions relating to internal reviews, handling unreasonable complainant conduct, evidence-based decision-making, transparency of outcomes and public reporting on complaint performance and trends.

5. Importance of communication and relationship-building

Several respondents highlighted the value of maintaining direct communication between Council, Councillors and community members. Feedback reflected a desire for more opportunities for discussion, explanation of decisions and ongoing engagement to resolve concerns before they escalate to a formal complaint.

PROPOSED POLICY CHANGES BASED ON ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

Feedback informed a number of refinements to the final policy, including improved plain language, strengthened accessibility provisions, clearer information regarding complaint handling timeframes and updates, and additional clarification of review and escalation pathways. Specific proposed changes to the policy as a result of engagement are detailed below:

1. Guiding principles have been incorporated into the policy and ordered according to the community's priority of importance;
2. Font size has been increased in-line with government accessibility standards;
3. The community commented that simplification of language and visual aids could be included in the policy, while others sought more detail in how the City manages complaints. A summary of the approach has been included in the 'Complaint Handling Approach' section of the policy and further detail added in the subsequent paragraphs.
4. More detail has been provided to help complainants navigate each level of the complaint handling approach. Additional wording pertaining to timeframes, communication steps, reasons why a complaint may or will not be investigated, the considerations taken into account to help resolve a complaint and a definition of what form a 'resolution' might take has been added.
5. A strong statement of the City's commitment to protecting staff from occupational violence and aggression has been included;
6. The City's commitment to training staff and more detail on the reporting of complaints has also been added to the policy.
7. Stronger procedural governance regarding complaints about staff and decision making to restrict or limit access to services when complainant behaviours necessitate have been included.

NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

Feedback received through the community consultation process has been reviewed and considered in finalising the Complaint Handling Policy.

The policy has been updated to reflect community feedback, including improvements to clarity, accessibility, transparency and explanations of the complaint handling process.

Strong support for the proposed complaint handling principles has informed the inclusion of the Guiding Principles within the final policy, including Commitment, Accessibility, Transparency, Objectivity and Fairness, Privacy, Accountability and Continuous Improvement.

Feedback regarding communication and transparency has informed additional clarification of complaint handling timeframes, customer updates, review processes and escalation pathways.

The final Complaint Handling Policy will be presented to Council for consideration and adoption.

Subject to Council adoption, the policy will be published on the City's website and implemented across the organisation.

The City will continue to monitor complaints data and customer feedback to identify opportunities for ongoing service improvement and policy review.