

Betty Gallagher

From: Bradley, Cathy <BradleyC@hastingscounty.com>
Sent: September 21, 2017 2:38 PM
To: Arlene Cox; Bernice Crocker; Betty Gallagher; Bill Lebow (clerk@madoc.ca); Christine Martin; Dawn Switzer; Gail Maracle; Hazel Lambe; Jennifer Trumble (clerk@township.limerick.on.ca); Pat Pilgrim; Roxanne Hearn (cao@stirling-rawdon.com); Tonia Bennett; Tyendinaga CAO; Typhany Choinard; Wollaston Township Hastings County Complaints Policy and Procedure
Subject: complaints policy and procedure appendix a Final.docx; Corporate Complaints Handling Policy Final.docx; Corporate Complaints Handling Procedures Final.docx; Complaint Acknowledgement and Receipt letter.docx; Complaint Resolution Letter.docx; Complaint letter advising of delay.docx
Attachments:
Importance: High

Good afternoon,

At our most recent Finance, Property & Personnel Committee meeting, Councillors asked if we could distribute the County's Complaint Policy and Procedures to all local municipalities for your information. Some of you may already have these in place but for those who do not have a formal policy, I offer the attached for your consideration. It will of course require editing to make it suitable for your organization's individual needs but I hope you find the information helpful. I have also attached some support documentation which I outline below.

Support Documents

Included are sample response letters/emails to complaints:

- 1) Acknowledgement and receipt letter /email – this confirms receipt of the complaint and is to be sent within 3 days of receiving the complaint (that's our timeframe) ☺
- 2) Sample letter/Email advising of a delay in resolution – advises the complainant that you will be unable to resolve the issue within the allotted time
- 3) Complaint resolution letter – advises of the resolution and steps taken to resolve the complaint

Complaints Portal

When our policy came into force we also launched a complaints portal on the County website. I have copied the link below. Under our policy a complaint needs to be in writing and cannot be anonymous, so this mechanism assists everyone with an easy and accessible way to submit a complaint.

<http://www.hastingscounty.com/content/feedback>

The complainant can choose the department/service that the complaint is directed to and an email form is sent to the Department head of the particular area with the details and is also copied to a complaints email for tracking purposes.

Items for Consideration

Part of the discussion at Tuesday's meeting was that as a local municipality you may wish to consider differentiating between a Request for Service or a Complaint. It was recognized that just because someone requests something to be done that the request should not necessarily be considered a complaint. This could easily be managed locally by

including a page on your websites for Requests for Services, Complaints and Compliments. (Always nice to hear those!) It could be facilitated by creating email addresses for each of the submissions.

For example:

complaints@hastingscounty.com

Requestforservice@hastingscounty.com

The emails could be sent to yourself or whomever you designate and could also be set up with an auto response advising that the request/complaint has been received and someone will be in touch to discuss.

If anyone wishes to discuss anything in more detail please do not hesitate to call me directly.

Best regards,
Cathy

Cathy Bradley

Deputy Clerk, Corporate Communications Officer

Executive Assistant to the CAO and Warden



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	Original Issued:	Supersedes:	Last Revised:
Date:	August 25, 2016		August 25, 2016

Policy Statement

The County of Hastings is committed to a consistent and uniform process to respond to complaints received from members of the public regarding programs, facilities, county services, staff or operational procedures. This policy and the accompanying procedures outline the process to be followed and service standards for the handling of public complaints.

Purpose

The County of Hastings recognises the importance of public feedback and welcomes complaints as a valuable form of feedback regarding our services, operations and facilities. The information gained from complaints helps improve the quality of the services provided by the County and the client experience of residents.

Application

This policy **applies to:**

- Hastings County employees, with the following exceptions:

This policy **does not** apply to:

The County's Elected Officials.

This policy applies to complaints that are received online at hastingscounty.com, by phone, at a service/reception desk, by email, by mail or by fax.

This policy **does not** apply to:

- Requests for service
- Feedback
- Compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints
- Request for accommodations

These communications and requests are all handled through other mechanisms and processes.

Policy Requirements

The County of Hastings will deal with all complaints promptly, courteously, impartially and professionally. All complainants will be treated with respect and will not receive adverse treatment or any form of reprisal.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with *the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and other applicable legislation. The identity of the complainant will be made known only to those who need to know in order to consider the complaint. All participants in the complaints process shall keep the details of the complaint confidential except as may be required by law. If the matter goes to arbitration, it may be necessary to release the complainant's name and contact information during the resolution process.

Complaints received by one department are to be limited to that specific department unless the complaint involves more than one department. Generally, Department A will not be able to view complaints received by Department B unless operationally required to address the complaint.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or services provided by the County of Hastings or by a person or body acting on behalf of the County of Hastings.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who uses or is affected by County services can make a complaint. This includes:

- residents
- people who work in or visit the County
- local businesses
- community groups

Some individuals may require assistance to make a complaint, and complaints can be made on their behalf, provided that the person affected has given their consent. A consent form for this purpose is available from each department (Appendix A).

Complaints can be submitted:

- Online via the County's website hastingscounty.com;
- By telephone;
- By email;
- By mail;
- By fax;
- In person at any County Office.

Complaints regarding fraudulent activities in relation to the receipt of benefits through Ontario Works, Children's Services or Housing Services should be directed to the Fraud Hotline at 800-267-5265.

Service Standards

The following Service Standards will be adhered to in the handling of all complaints received.

- All complaints filed necessitate a response.
- Complainants must receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their complaint within three business days. This acknowledgement must identify who will be following up on the complaint as well as their contact information.

- A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 20 business days, barring exceptional circumstances.
- Complaints that are forwarded between departments more than two times will, at the third forwarding, be automatically directed to the County Clerk, who will ensure that the complaint is forwarded to the appropriate department for response.

Compliance

Department Heads are responsible for implementation and ongoing compliance with the Corporate Complaints Handling Policy.

Quarterly reports will be provided to Department Heads by the County Clerk, indicating the number of complaints received during a specified timeframe, the number of complaints to date, the number of complaints meeting service standards, the number of complaints outstanding, and the number of complaints not meeting service standards.

Responsibilities

Employees: All employees are to have knowledge and awareness of the County's requirement to receive complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

Supervisors: Supervisors are responsible for facilitating prompt response to all complaints by their staff to ensure that service standards are achieved.

Department Heads: Department Heads are responsible for the receipt and response of all complaints according to the service standards set out. Department Heads hold responsibility for departmental compliance to the Complaints Policy.

Quality Assurance: The IT Department is responsible for matters of a technical nature pertaining to the complaints system.

Monitoring/Contraventions

The County Clerk within the Administration Department will monitor corporate compliance with this policy and will follow up with appropriate departments as required.

References

Corporate Complaints Handling Procedures

Legislative and Administrative Authorities

Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

Definitions

Complaint – any expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or services provided by the County of Hastings or by a person or body acting on behalf of the County of Hastings. The term “dissatisfaction” is key to the definition of a complaint. Feedback of a positive or general nature, comments on a service or facility that do not require a response, or requests for service, are not complaints. Complaints imply that the complainant is unhappy with the service received and that they require a follow-up response in regards to the issue.

Complainant – the person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by County services can make a complaint including: residents, people who work in or visit the county, local businesses or community groups.

Compliment – an expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.

Feedback – Input from client that is neither positive, nor negative, but provides input or ideas.

Enquiries

For more information on this policy please contact:

County Clerk
613-966-1311 ext. 3204

Appendices

[Appendix A – Representative Consent Form](#)

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	Original Issued:	Supersedes:	Last Revised:
Date:	August 25, 2016		August 25, 2016

Application

The document outlines the procedures related to the County of Hastings Corporate Complaints Handling Policy and applies to:

- County employees, with the following exceptions:

These procedures **do not** apply to:

- a) The County’s Elected Officials.

These procedures apply to complaints that are received online at hastingscounty.com, by phone, at a service/reception desk, by email, by mail or by fax.

They **do not** apply to:

- Requests for service
- Feedback
- Compliments
- Inquiries
- Anonymous complaints
- Request for accommodations

These communications and requests are handled through other mechanisms and processes.

Procedure Description

The following procedures outline the process governing the reception, confirmation, acknowledgement, investigation and resolution of complaints received via the following channels:

- Online via the County’s website hastingscounty.com;
- By telephone;
- By email;
- By mail;
- By fax;
- In person at any County Office.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the action or lack of action taken regarding operations, facilities or service provided by the County of Hastings or by a person or body acting on behalf of the County of Hastings. All complaints filed necessitate a response.

Complaints regarding fraudulent activities in relation to the receipt of benefits through Ontario Works, Children's Services or Housing Services should be directed to the Fraud Hotline at 800-267-5265.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who uses or is affected by County services can make a complaint. This includes:

- Residents
- People who work in or visit the county
- Local businesses
- Community groups

Some individuals may need help to submit a complaint, and complaints can be made on their behalf, provided that the person affected has given their consent. A consent form ([Appendix A](#)) is available for this purpose from each department.

Service Standards

Complainants must receive an acknowledgement receipt from the department receiving the complaint within three business days. This acknowledgement must identify the name of and contact information for the individual who will be following up on the complaint.

A final response or update must be sent to the complainant within 20 business days from the date the complaint was received, barring exceptional circumstances.

1. Inputting a complaint

1.1 Complaint made on hastingscounty.com.

When a complainant makes a complaint on hastingscounty.com, they are directed to a complaints landing page. This page provides an explanation of the complaints process and contains a definition of what constitutes a complaint. It also includes a form to be completed by the complainant.

Complainants must include their contact information in order to submit the complaint, and must choose which department their complaint applies to. To assist complainants in identifying the appropriate department a listing of departments, and the most commonly used service areas, is provided.

1.2 Complaint made by phone, email, mail, fax or at the service/reception counter

Staff receiving the complaint will input the information related to the complaint into the complaints landing page on hastingscounty.com.

2. Notification of a complaint

All complaints that are submitted online by the client or by a staff member will generate an automatic notification of the arrival of a new complaint to the appropriate staff.

3. Acknowledgement of a complaint

3.1 Complaint made on hastingscounty.com

After a complaint is input at hastingscounty.com, the submitter receives the following message:

Thank you for your feedback. Your submission was received successfully. Your complaint will be sent directly to the appropriate department head and an acknowledgement will be sent within 3 business days. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

3.2 Complaint received by phone, email, mail, fax or at the service counter

In this case, the staff submitting the complaint on behalf of the complainant will receive the confirmation message. It is then the responsibility of the inputting staff to provide the three-day timeline information to the original complainant. This may be provided to the client by phone, email, mail, fax or at the counter.

4. Assignment of a complaint to a department by the system

Department Heads are considered the "complaint owner." They are responsible for ensuring that staffing changes affecting who receives the complaints are promptly communicated to the IT Department.

Within three business days of a complaint being received at the County, the departmental or branch staff responsible for the response must contact the complainant to acknowledge and:

1. confirm that the complaint is being investigated/reviewed;
2. will be responded to within 20 working days; and
3. provide the name and contact information for the person in the department who is handling the complaint.

This acknowledgement can be in the form of a verbal conversation, email, phone, fax or letter (depending upon the complainant's preferred contact method indicated when submitting a complaint).

5. Investigation of a complaint by a department

When the Department Head receives a complaint notification, they must review the complaint and identify the appropriate departmental or branch staff to develop the response to the complaint.

If the response takes longer than 20 business days, the complainant must again be contacted and assured that the complaint is being addressed and that a response will be provided as soon as possible.

6. Final response and close-out of a complaint

The response to the complaint must be approved by the Department Head and sent to the complainant as quickly as possible.

7. Special cases

7.1 A department receives a complaint that is meant for a different department

If a complaint is received by a department in error and needs to be handled by another County department, it should be forwarded to the appropriate Department Head.

If there is a delay of more than one day in the forwarding of the complaint from the initial department to the appropriate department, the initial department receiving the complaint should contact the complainant to tell them that their complaint was received and has to be re-directed to another department for response, and that they will hear from that department shortly.

When the appropriate department receives the forwarded complaint, the three-day response service standard begins anew for the department now receiving the complaint.

Complaints that are forwarded between departments more than two times will, at the third forwarding, be automatically directed to the County Clerk, who will ensure that the complaint is forwarded to the appropriate department for response.

Responsibilities

Employees: All employees are to have knowledge and awareness of the County's requirement to receive complaints, the process through which a complaint can be made and the service standards that apply to complaints.

Supervisors: Supervisors are responsible for facilitating prompt response to all complaints by their staff to ensure that service standards are achieved.

Department Heads: Department Heads are responsible for the receipt and response of all complaints according to the service standards set out. Department Heads hold responsibility for departmental compliance to the Corporate Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures.

Quality Assurance: The IT Department is responsible for matters of a technical nature pertaining to the complaints system.

Monitoring/Contraventions

The County Clerk will monitor corporate compliance with this policy and will follow up with appropriate departments as required.

References

Corporate Complaints Handling Policy

Administrative and Legislative Authorities

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

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Complainant – the person who is dissatisfied and filing the complaint. Anyone who uses or is affected by County services can make a complaint including: residents, people who work in or visit the county, local businesses or community groups.

Complaint Owner – the Department Head to which the complaint applies. The Department Head may delegate responsibility for responding to the complaint to another branch staff; however, the Department Head remains the complaint owner in all instances.

Compliment – an expression of appreciation for satisfactory or above-satisfactory service.

Feedback – input from client that is neither positive, nor negative, but provides input or ideas.

Enquiries

For more information on these procedures, contact:

County Clerk
613-966-1311 ext. 3204

Appendices

Appendix A – Representative Consent Form



County of Hastings Complaints

Appendix A

Complaint Representative Consent Form

I, _____, consent to have all communications and information relating to my complaint with the County of Hastings disclosed to my representative _____.

Name of complainant: _____
Signature: _____
Date: -- / -- / ----

All personal information you choose to provide on this form is collected under the authority of Section 227(c) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, S.O. 2001, c. 25. The information will be used to confirm your consent under Section 32(b) of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56 to disclose information relating to your complaint to the third party you identified. Questions about this collection can be directed to the County Clerk:

County Administration Building,
P.O. Bag 4400
235 Pinnacle St. Belleville, ON K8N 3A9,
(613) 966-1311 ext. 3204,
pinej@hastingscounty.com

SAMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT

[Insert name and address]

Dear *[insert Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr Surname]*

Thank you for your letter dated *[insert date]* concerning *[insert summary of letter]*. I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence.

I will review the matter/s you have raised and the information you have provided. If an investigation is required, I will coordinate the investigation. All documentation related to the investigation of your concerns will be treated in a confidential manner to protect your privacy; however, you should be aware that confidentiality is different than anonymity. An individual being complained about must be informed of the complaint.

This process should be completed within 20 working days. If there are any delays, you will be contacted and informed of the progress in 15 day intervals.

We are always striving to improve our services at *[insert name of Dept]*, so thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. Please don't hesitate to contact me on the number listed below if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name and contact details]

SAMPLE COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

[Insert name and address]

Dear [insert Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr Surname]

Thank you for sharing your experience with [insert name of Dept]. It is important that we get feedback about our service, so I appreciate that you took the time and effort to let me know about your experience.

In relation to [set out complaint issue 1], [insert name of Dept] investigated the incident based on the information you provided. [Detail how the investigation was conducted. Summarize the facts.] What we discovered throughout the investigation, [insert conclusions and actions taken].

On behalf of [insert name of Dept] I would like to express my regret [or insert other appropriate remedy] that the service that was provided to you [or insert appropriate person] did not meet your expectations.

Or

On behalf of [insert name of Dept] I want to thank you for bringing your concerns forward.

If you wish to have this matter reviewed by our CAO please contact me at the number below and I will provide you contact information for the Administration Office.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

[Insert name and contact details]