



Corporation of the Town of Cobourg

Division: Executive Services Division

Effective Date: March 1st 2025

Department: Office of the CAO

Approval Level: Council

Policy Title: Customer Service Policy

Section # 3-3
Policy # CAO - ADM2

Purpose

The Town of Cobourg recognizes that exceptional customer service is essential to fostering trust, engagement, and satisfaction among residents, businesses, and visitors. This policy establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure the Town delivers high-quality, equitable, and responsive services that meet the diverse needs of its community.

This policy aims to:

1. **Set Clear Service Standards:** Establish clear service standards by defining expectations for respectful, professional, and accessible interactions across all communication channels, including in-person, online, by phone, email, and through written correspondence
2. **Facilitate Timely and Transparent Responses:** Ensure that inquiries, service requests, are addressed promptly, transparently, and effectively, contributing to a culture of accountability.
3. **Promote Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Ensure all customers, regardless of ability or background, can access and benefit from Town services in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.
4. **Encourage Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Create opportunities for customers to provide feedback that informs ongoing service enhancements, innovation, and responsiveness to community needs.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and agents acting on behalf of the Town of Cobourg. It reinforces the Town's commitment to excellence in customer service by aligning practices with its Customer Service Charter and legislative obligations, such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Through this policy, the Town of Cobourg seeks to strengthen its relationships with the community by building trust, promoting collaboration, and enhancing the overall customer experience.

Definitions

“CAO” refers to the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Cobourg.

“Council” refers to the Council of the Town of Cobourg.

“Division” refers to **any** functional division within the organizational structure of the Town of Cobourg.

“Division Director” refers to **the** Director of a Division within the Town.



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“Personal Information” refers to the definition in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

“Town” refers to The Corporation of the Town of Cobourg.

“Town Property” refers to property owned, leased, or operated by the Town, including indoor and outdoor facilities, spaces, and assets.

“Town Services” refers to services provided by the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg, its employees, or representatives.

“Town Staff” refers to **employees** of the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg.

“Customer Feedback” refers to **comments**, suggestions, or complaints provided by customers regarding their experience with Town services.

“Service Request” refers to **a** formal inquiry or demand made by a customer seeking assistance, information, or resolution of an issue related to Town services.

“Accessibility Needs” refers to specific requirements or accommodations necessary to ensure equitable access to services for individuals with disabilities, in compliance with AODA and related legislation.

“Urgent Requests” refers to **issues** that require immediate attention due to potential impacts on public safety, health, or critical infrastructure.

“Non-Urgent Requests” refers to **issues** that do not pose immediate risks and can be addressed within standard service timelines.



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Scope

This section outlines staff expectations in all customer interactions, guided by the five customer service principles outlined in the customer charter and this policy. It defines the standards and behaviors required to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality customer service.

Responsibilities

Council

It is the responsibility of all Members of Council to support this policy and encourage all staff to abide by the principles and provisions of this policy.

Staff

It is the responsibility of all staff to educate themselves on the policy and ensure the principles of good customer service are upheld in all interactions with the public.

Managers & Directors

It is the responsibility of all Managers and Directors to ensure the principles of this policy are followed by all staff reporting to them. Managers and Directors are responsible for ensuring their staff have been provided with adequate training regarding this policy.

CAO

It is the responsibility of the CAO to ensure all Division Directors adhere to the principles contained in this policy.

Customer Service Principles

1 – Respect & Accountability

We put our customers first, treating everyone with respect, empathy, and professionalism. To ensure consistent customer service standards across the organization, and in every interaction with customers, staff will:

- Understand the value of the customer in all interactions
- Be visible, attentive, and accessible to customers
- Demonstrate pride in self and in our organization



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- Show care and respect for customers and fellow employees
- Treat customers in a fair, equitable, and consistent manner
- Behave with integrity, honesty, and respect
- Hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards in our own work
- Take accountability and ownership for customer requests
- A commitment by all Town employees to meet the standards set out in this policy

2 – Communications & Engagement

We communicate clearly and engage openly, ensuring we have accessible ways to share feedback and stay informed.

- Communicate openly and honestly with customers
- Use plain language that is easy to understand
- Ensure customers receive accurate, complete, and up-to-date information in a timely manner
- Provide information across a variety of communication channels for customer ease
- Offer diverse channels for customers to engage with the Town and provide feedback on decision-making processes
- Ensure information and engagement is provided in an accessible format whenever requested by a customer, in compliance with AODA and applicable legislation
- Proactively communicate changes and services disruptions including reasons and expected resolution timelines wherever possible to customers

3 – Timely

We strive to resolve customer requests efficiently and keep them informed every step of the way. To ensure a consistent customer service standard is applied across the organization, and in every interaction with Town staff, customers can expect the following from us



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- Address customer requests at the first point of contact whenever feasible, minimizing the need for escalation
- When a request cannot be answered at the first point of contact, provide a timeline for a complete resolution in alignment with Appendix A attached to this policy
- Staff will adhere to the response times indicated in Appendix A attached to this policy
- Staff will take ownership and follow up with service requests in a timely manner
- When a service request cannot meet the timelines outlined in Appendix A, staff will proactively communicate with the customer ahead of time, providing a reason for the delay and expected date for full resolution
- All staff will check their voicemail and email multiple times throughout their scheduled workday

4 – Accessible

We ensure our buildings, spaces, and services are accessible and welcoming, and inclusive for everyone. To ensure a consistent customer service standard is applied across the organization, and in every interaction with Town staff, customers can expect the following from us

- Ensure our services, buildings, and spaces are compliant with AODA and applicable legislation
- Provide reasonable accommodation to all customers whenever a request for accommodation is made
- Be responsive to the diverse needs of customers, meeting them where they need support
- Respect, encourage and celebrate diversity
- Ensure services, buildings, and spaces comply with AODA and other applicable legislation



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- Staff will ensure that all community members, regardless of ability, have equitable access to Town programs, services, and facilities
- Staff will engage with customers to understand their accessibility needs and integrate their feedback into municipal practices
- Ensure compliance with all Provincial and Federal accessibility legislation

5 – Innovation and Continuous Improvement

We are committed to continuous improvement, constantly enhancing our services to meet evolving customer needs. To ensure a consistent customer service standard is applied across the organization, and in every interaction with Town staff, you can expect the following from us

- Take initiative; understand what needs to be done and take appropriate action
- Introduce technology that will simplify access to Town services while enhancing the customer experience
- Embrace new ways of looking at old problems
- Recognize the value of partnerships in delivering innovative, high-quality programs and services
- Foster a culture that celebrates continuous improvement and innovation amongst all staff
- Embrace advancements in technology and recognize their relevance in today's world.
- Collaborate with other departments to provide the best possible customer experience
- Prioritize innovations that are sustainable, scalable, and aligned with the Town of Cobourg's strategic plan.
- Focus on meaningful outcomes, ensuring innovations deliver tangible benefits to customers



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- Continuously evaluate emerging trends and evolving community expectations to proactively adapt service

Privacy

The Town of Cobourg is committed to protecting the personal information of our customers. Any personal information submitted to the Town, whether through service requests, communications, or transactions, will be handled in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and the *Municipal Act, 2001*. This information may be used to provide services, respond to inquiries, or fulfill legal and administrative obligations.

Please note that information provided to the Town may be subject to access-to-information requests under MFIPPA, unless exempted by law. If you have any questions regarding the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, please contact the Town's Clerks Department.

Training

All staff will receive training on this policy during orientation and be provided with a copy for reference.


Administration

The Chief Administrative Officer shall implement and administer the terms of this policy and shall establish related operating procedures as required.

Cross Reference

Minimum Maintenance Standards By-law

Service Level Agreement for By-law

Division Director / Resolution	Revision Purpose/Description:	Municipal Clerk/Approved by CAO: 	Council/Division Director Approval Date: January 29, 2025
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Appendix A – Service Standards

Service Level Standards Summary	Response Timeline
Email Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emails will be acknowledged within two (2) business days of receipt. If a full resolution is not possible within that time, the acknowledgment email will include an estimated timeline for a complete response. Directors and Managers may delegate responses to customer inquiries to staff as deemed appropriate.• When an employee is away from the office for more than (1) business day, they should include an automatic absence message on their outlook providing a colleague's name, title, email, and phone number that can provide support while out of the office. Employees must also include an expected return date when possible.• When an employee is going to be away from the office for an extended period, they should ensure they have sufficient space remaining in their Outlook inbox to continue receiving email messages
Telephone & Voicemail Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All telephone calls & voicemails should be returned within (2) business days. Directors and Managers may delegate responses to customer inquiries to staff as deemed appropriate.• All employees are expected to update their voicemail greeting on a weekly basis. An employee's voicemail greeting should include their name, job title, division, and availability in the office for the remainder of the week. This should be updated on or before the first day of an employee's normal work week.• An example of a staff standard voicemail greeting is as follows. "Hello, you have reached the voicemail of Chris Challenger, Manager Office of the CAO at the Town of Cobourg for the week of December 16th 2024. I'm currently in the office Monday to Friday this week, but unable to take your call at the moment. If



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	<p>you leave your name, number, and a brief description of your inquiry, either myself or a member of my team will return your call within 48 hours. Thank you and have a wonderful day.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an employee is away from the office for more than one (1) business day, they should include an absence message on their voicemail with their expected return to work date, and provide a coworker’s name, title, email, and phone number that can provide support while out of the office. • When an employee is going to be away from the office for an extended period of time, and where possible, they should ensure they have sufficient space remaining on their voicemail to continue receiving messages.
Written Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When written correspondence is received at the Town, and a return address has been provided, written correspondence will be acknowledged within 20 days of receipt.
Fax Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When fax correspondence is received at the Town, and a return fax number has been provided, fax correspondence will be acknowledged within 20 days of receipt.
Walk ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers will be greeted by a member of staff promptly when entering a Town Facility. Frontline staff will work with the customer to address their service request/question. • If a resolution cannot be achieved, that staff member will provide the contact information of someone at the Town who is able to assist with that request. If possible, staff can walk the customer to the appropriate department to assist with their request (i.e. walking a customer from the Clerk’s Office to Corporate Services in Victoria Hall).
Planning & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning staff aim to ensure all complete planning applications made under the Ontario Planning Act are processed within the legislated timelines. • Building staff aim to ensure all complete building permit applications made under the Ontario Building Code are processed within legislated timelines.



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By-Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses to by-law inquiries are in accordance with the by-law service level agreement which can be found here. 	
City Works (Community Services and Public Works)	<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All requests for service received through the Town's City Works Platform website will be reviewed within 24 hours by staff. Responses will be prioritized based on the severity of the issue, operational considerations, and our minimum maintenance standards by-law which can be found here. Examples would include the following on Township Property; traffic lights not working, fallen tree on road, vandalism, impacts to life-safety. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All requests for service will be reviewed within seven (7) business days. Responses will be prioritized based on the severity of the issue, operational considerations, and our minimum maintenance standards by-law which can be found here. Examples would include the following on Township Property; routine maintenance requests, minor potholes and sidewalk cracks, garbage overflow at a park.
Legislative Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerks' staff aim to process all Freedom of Information Requests made under MFIPPA within the legislated timelines. Clerks' staff will process requests for delegations and presentations at Committee and Council Meetings in accordance with the Town's procedural by-law which can be found here. Clerks' staff will process all correspondence for Council in accordance with the Town's procedural by-law. 	