SHIRE OF SANDSTONE

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER 2026

Oasis of the Murchison

Our promise to the community
We will provide fair, respectful, accessible and accountable service. We will explain what we can do, keep you informed, protect your information, make decisions within our authority, and learn from feedback and complaints.

1. Purpose

This Charter sets the service standards the Shire of Sandstone aims to provide to residents, ratepayers, visitors, businesses, community organisations and other people who contact us. It also explains how customers can request a service, give feedback or make a complaint.

The Charter supports good local government administration. It is to be read with the Shire's adopted policies, delegations, codes of conduct, records requirements and relevant Western Australian legislation. If there is any inconsistency, legislation and formally adopted Shire instruments prevail.

2. Scope

- Applies to Shire employees, contractors, volunteers and authorised representatives when delivering Shire services.
- Covers contact in person, by telephone, email, post, online channels and other approved service channels.
- Does not replace statutory review, appeal, objection, infringement, freedom of information, public interest disclosure, council-member conduct or other processes established by law.

3. Our customer service principles

- Respect and dignity – we will be courteous, professional and culturally respectful.
- Fairness and impartiality – we will act without bias and apply relevant laws, policies and procedures consistently.
- Accessibility and inclusion – we will make reasonable efforts to provide accessible information and communication assistance.
- Accountability and transparency – we will explain processes, provide reasons where appropriate, and identify available review options.
- Privacy and confidentiality – personal information will be handled only for legitimate Shire purposes and in accordance with applicable legal and records requirements.

- Timeliness – we will respond as promptly as practicable and advise you if a matter needs more time.
- Continuous improvement – we will use feedback, complaint trends and service data to improve our services.

4. What you can expect from us

- Staff will identify themselves and their work area where appropriate.
- We will listen to your enquiry and clarify what outcome you are seeking.
- We will provide information that is clear, accurate and within our authority.
- If another agency or organisation is responsible, we will explain this and, where practicable, direct you to the appropriate body.
- We will keep appropriate records of significant requests, decisions, complaints and actions.
- We will not discriminate unlawfully and will seek to make services accessible to people with disability, communication needs, language barriers or other access needs.
- We will protect the safety and wellbeing of customers and staff.

5. Service standards

Contact type	Target	What this means
Telephone	During office hours	We aim to answer promptly. If the appropriate officer is unavailable, a message will be taken and referred.
Email / online enquiry	Acknowledge within 2 business days	We aim to provide a substantive response within 5 business days, or advise you of the expected timeframe.
Written correspondence	Acknowledge within 5 business days	We aim to provide a substantive response within 5 business days, unless the matter is complex or a statutory timeframe applies.
In-person visit	As soon as practicable	We will provide a welcoming and safe service. Appointments are recommended for matters requiring a particular officer.
Complaint	Acknowledge within 2 business days	We aim to finalise straightforward complaints within 10 business days. Complex matters may take longer; we will provide progress updates.

These are service targets, not statutory deadlines. Some matters require technical assessment, consultation, Council consideration, legal advice, site inspection or action by another agency. Where a law sets a different timeframe, the statutory timeframe applies.

6. Requests for service, feedback and complaints

Request for service

A request for service asks the Shire to provide information or take action, for example reporting a damaged sign, road issue, facility maintenance matter or requesting information about a Shire service.

Feedback

Feedback is a compliment, suggestion or comment about a Shire service or experience. Feedback may be used to improve services but does not necessarily require a formal investigation.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a Shire service, administrative action or inaction, decision-making process, or the conduct of a staff member or contractor, where a response or resolution is expected.

Some matters must be handled under a separate statutory or formal process. The Shire will advise the customer where another process applies.

The Shire Administration does not handle complaints about Elected Members but will advise a complainant where to direct the complaint.

7. Making a complaint

Complaints may be made in person, by telephone, email, post or an approved online form. A person may ask another person to assist or act on their behalf, subject to appropriate authority and privacy requirements.

- Tell us what happened, when and where it occurred, and the service or decision involved.
- Explain the outcome you are seeking.
- Provide relevant documents or evidence if available.
- Provide contact details if you want a direct response. Anonymous complaints may be considered where enough reliable information is available, but anonymity can limit the Shire's ability to investigate or respond.

8. How complaints will be handled

- Accessibility – complaint information will be easy to find and assistance will be offered where reasonably practicable.
- Assessment – the Shire will identify the issues, urgency, risks, responsible officer and whether another process applies.

- Impartiality – complaints will be handled by an officer with appropriate authority and, where practicable, without a conflict of interest.
- Procedural fairness – where a complaint may result in an adverse finding about an employee, that employee will be given a fair opportunity to respond before a conclusion is reached.
- Confidentiality – information will be shared only where necessary for proper handling of the matter or as required or authorised by law.
- Reasons and outcome – the Shire will explain the outcome and reasons where appropriate, together with any remedy, corrective action or review option.
- Records – complaints, actions and outcomes will be recorded in accordance with Shire recordkeeping requirements.

9. Escalation and review

If you are dissatisfied with the way a complaint has been handled, you may request an internal review by a more senior or appropriately independent officer where this is available and appropriate.

After giving the Shire a reasonable opportunity to resolve the matter, a person may be able to complain to the Department of Local Government or the Ombudsman Western Australia about local government administrative actions. Other review, appeal or oversight bodies may apply depending on the subject matter. The Shire will provide information about relevant avenues where appropriate.

Complaints about council members, candidates or the CEO may be subject to specific statutory, code-of-conduct or integrity processes and may not be dealt with under this general Charter.

10. Customer responsibilities

- Treat Shire staff, elected members, contractors and other customers with courtesy and respect.
- Provide accurate, relevant and complete information.
- Tell us promptly if circumstances or contact details change.
- Allow reasonable time for the Shire to assess and respond to complex matters.
- Respect privacy, confidentiality, safety and the rights of other people.
- Use Shire complaint and review processes responsibly.

11. Unreasonable or unsafe conduct

The Shire recognises a person's right to complain, disagree with a decision and seek a review. However, abusive, threatening, discriminatory, intimidating or persistently unreasonable conduct is not acceptable.

Where conduct creates safety risks or unreasonably consumes resources, the Shire may set proportionate limits on how, when or through whom contact occurs. Any restriction should be authorised at an appropriate level, documented, communicated with reasons where practicable, and reviewed periodically. Emergency or essential service access will not be restricted inappropriately.

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12. Accessibility, inclusion and communication assistance

- Customers may tell us if they need information in an alternative format or assistance to communicate with the Shire.
- Where reasonably practicable, the Shire will support customers with disability, literacy needs, cultural or language needs, or who live remotely.
- Customers may use a support person, advocate or interpreter, subject to consent, authority and confidentiality requirements.
- Shire facilities, information and services will be considered in line with applicable access and inclusion obligations.

13. Privacy, confidentiality and records

The Shire will collect, use, disclose, store and dispose of information only for lawful Shire purposes and in accordance with applicable Western Australian legislation, the Shire's recordkeeping plan, policies and authorised procedures. Complaint and customer-service records are official records and must be captured and retained appropriately.

Customers should avoid providing unnecessary sensitive information. Information may need to be disclosed where required or authorised by law, for procedural fairness, investigation, safety or another legitimate government purpose.

14. Roles and responsibilities

- Council – sets strategic direction, adopts relevant policies and performs functions assigned to it by law. Individual elected members do not direct Shire employees in day-to-day operational matters.
- Chief Executive Officer – is responsible for the administration of the Shire, implementation of Council decisions and management of employees in accordance with legislation and Council policy.
- Managers and authorised officers – ensure enquiries and complaints are allocated, assessed and handled appropriately within delegated authority.
- Employees and contractors – provide professional service, maintain records, protect confidential information and escalate matters outside their authority.

15. Monitoring and continuous improvement

- Customer feedback and satisfaction information.
- Complaint numbers, themes, response times and outcomes.
- Recurring service issues and opportunities for corrective action.
- Accessibility and inclusion feedback.
- Internal reviews, audits and staff training needs.

Material trends and systemic issues should be reported to management and, where appropriate, to Council through established governance reporting arrangements.

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16. Document control and review

Document	Customer Service Charter
Responsible officer	Chief Executive Officer / delegated governance or customer service officer
Approval authority	Council or CEO, subject to the Shire's policy framework and governance determination
Adoption / approval date	23 October 2026
Review cycle	At least every 2 years, or earlier following legislative, organisational or service changes
Next review	23 October 2028
Version	Version 1.0 - 2026
Related documents	Code of Conduct; Complaints/Customer Service procedures; Recordkeeping Plan; Delegations Register; Disability Access and Inclusion Plan; Work Health and Safety procedures; relevant Council policies

17. Legislative and good-practice framework

This Charter has been drafted with reference to the current Western Australian local government framework and public-sector complaint-handling principles. Before formal adoption, the CEO should confirm the final wording against its current policies, delegations, recordkeeping plan, access and inclusion arrangements and any legislative amendments.

- Local Government Act 1995 (WA) and applicable regulations.
- State Records Act 2000 (WA) and the Shire's approved Recordkeeping Plan.
- Disability Services Act 1993 (WA) and applicable access and inclusion requirements.
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA).
- Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA).
- Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA), where applicable.
- Ombudsman Western Australia guidance on effective complaint handling, procedural fairness, accessibility, good decision-making and unreasonable complainant conduct.

18. Contact the Shire

Shire of Sandstone
Address: 23 Hack Street, Sandstone
Telephone: 09 9963 5802
Email: administration@sandstone.wa.gov.au
Website: www.sandstone.wa.gov.au
Office hours: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday – Friday (closed public holidays)

For urgent threats to life or property, contact the appropriate emergency service. This Charter does not replace emergency reporting arrangements.