



Local
Government
Association
of South
Australia



Government
of South Australia

The guide for
developing and
implementing a

Business Charter

in Local Government



Initiating



1

Cataloguing



2

Consulting



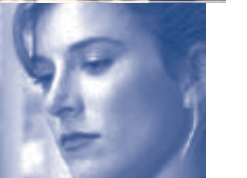
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Drafting



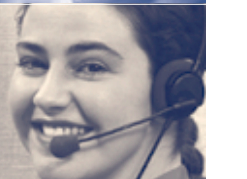
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Remedies



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Feedback



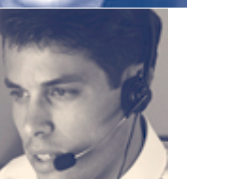
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Analysis



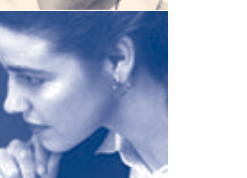
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Publishing



8

Monitoring



9

Developing and implementing a Business Charter

in Local Government

Foreword

Local Government plays a significant role in economic development and in supporting and interacting with local businesses.

Traditionally however it has not marketed Council activities specifically to the business sector well and as a result has suffered from a lack of understanding in business and less than optimum constructive feedback.

This is not to say that there are not also gaps in how Councils are serving businesses. The Business Charters project is designed to assist both in communication between Councils and business but also in improving Council responsiveness to business.

The original approach with guidelines being issued in late 1999 has seen some 7 councils (or 10%) adopt business charters or policies and a further 3 are working on charters in 2002.

Given the importance of this project the Association's Executive has decided to challenge every Council to adopt a business charter by mid-2004.



This decision was made in the knowledge of these guidelines, of the support of the State Government and that the LGA will be assisting in particular helping Councils to network on these issues.

The guidelines are practical, have been developed with Council input and are sensitive to the different sizes and capacities of Councils.

I appreciate the State Government support in this project and look forward to a growing engagement between Councils and their business communities.

Mayor Johanna McLuskey
PRESIDENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF SA

Developing and implementing a **Business Charter**

in Local Government

Foreword

South Australia is a special place in which to live and conduct business. The State Government is committed to providing a business friendly and supportive environment, with efficient services and minimal red tape. This commitment will help to realise broader economic goals including increased competitiveness and greater investment in our state. Importantly this will contribute to increased employment opportunities for all South Australians.

Every business ordinarily interacts on a daily basis with Local Government over a range of functions. Local Government therefore has a key role in fostering a supportive environment for business to operate and grow. This does not obviate the need for business to be a good neighbour, but is about understanding business and the need to respond efficiently and fairly over a range of matters to help all business to be as competitive and successful as they can be.



Recently a number of Local Councils, both metropolitan and rural, participated in a pilot project to develop their own business charters with the assistance of the Local Government Association (LGA) and State Government.

I applaud the initiative demonstrated by those Councils that has been articulated into this guide, which is now available to assist others to develop their own business service charters, and welcome the LGA's challenge to every Council to adopt a business charter by mid 2004.

I wish all Councils, through the use of this guide and through working cooperatively with their own local business communities, every success in developing a business charter for their area.

Jane Lomax-Smith
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Contents

Foreword	Mayor Johanna McLuskey Jane Lomax-Smith	1 2
Introduction		4
Background		4
What is a Business Charter?		5
The Business Charter Implementation Process		6
Step 1		
Initiate the Process		7
Step 2		
Catalogue and Review Existing Business Services		9
Step 3		
Consult with the Local Business Community		10
Step 4		
Draft the Charter and Develop Appropriate Standards for the Delivery of each Business Service		11
Step 5		
Explore Remedies for Failing to Comply with Standards		12
Step 6		
Develop and Implement a Complaints and Feedback Handling Procedure/System		13
Step 7		
Elicit Feedback on the Draft Business Charter		15
Step 8		
Publish and Ensure Access to Your Business Charter		16
Step 9		
Monitor, Document, Evaluate and Review		17
Appendices:		
I	Model Business Charter	19
II	Principles for a Business Contact Officer	21
III	Obtaining Business Charters developed as part of the Pilot Project	22
IV	Development Tools for Business Charters	23

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This edition contains minor updates and editing only.

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June, 2002

Developing and implementing a Business Charter

in Local Government

Introduction

The level and efficiency with which services are delivered to businesses in your local area is of significant importance to their viability. The use of a business charter provides you with an opportunity to ensure that the services offered to business are appropriate and provided in a timely and efficient manner.

This guide aims to provide a step by step overview of the process for developing and implementing a business charter in your council. It is important to note, however, that it is a guide only. Some sections of the process detailed below may require more or less emphasis than others depending on the characteristics of the businesses in your local area and the services you provide.

While this guide is aimed at the development of a business charter, the underlying principles are applicable to any customer group in your council area.



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Background

In early 1998, the South Australian Government announced a package of assistance initiatives for small business entitled 'Committed to Small Business Success – The Second Step'. Included in this package was a commitment to encourage the implementation of business charters in councils across the State.

This initiative was put forward after consultation with the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) in response to South Australian Government research which suggested that many small businesses were not receiving the level of service they expected from their local council¹.

South Australian Government agencies currently have in place business charters for their dealings with the business community. These have provided an excellent mechanism by which the Government can ensure that various agencies' services are delivered in an appropriate manner.

This guide was developed by a Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from the LGA, councils and State Government, supported by Bronwyn Halliday and Associates, to assist and encourage you to adopt a business charter in your council.

¹ Source: McGregor Marketing 1997

What is a Business Charter?

Prior to outlining the basic steps for developing and implementing a business charter, it is important to answer a few simple questions about business charters and their purpose.

What is a Business Charter?

A business charter is a quality assurance tool, centred around a commitment to a minimum level of service delivery to business clients.

The business charter is a plainly worded document that has two major components:

- A catalogue of the various services that a council provides to local businesses; and,
- A commitment to a certain minimum standard in delivering these services.

The business charter should be only one, but highly important, component of your council's customer service framework applied to servicing business.

Appendix I includes a 'model' business charter for your information. Copies of business charters developed as part of the pilot stage of this program can be found on LGA.net or by contacting the LGA on (8224 2000). Each charter is different, reflecting the different circumstances of the council, and show the variety of approaches that are possible.

What are the Benefits of a Business Charter?

A business charter can provide a variety of benefits to not only local business, but also your organisation.

Benefits to your council:

- Matching your services with the needs and expectations of business;
- Enhancing your local area as a place to do business;
- Promotion of the various services that you provide;
- Ensuring continual management and operational improvement; and,
- Ensuring that business operators do not have unreasonable expectations about your ability to deliver service.

Benefits to your local business community:

- Easily available information about your services;
- More relevant and appropriate services;
- Transparency and accountability in service delivery; and,
- Increased awareness of the needs of businesses, particularly the various needs of businesses in different industry sectors.

While the business charter is the final outcome of the process documented in this guide, the process itself, particularly the activity of engaging with businesses, will prove rewarding to members of your organisation.

The Business Charter implementation process

Where to start?

A process for developing and implementing a business charter in your council is outlined below. This guide has been based on other guides developed by Governments across Australia, but has been refined to ensure relevance to the local government and business relationship in South Australia. Six local councils have piloted it and their input is reflected in the guide. Copies of their charters can be obtained by councils on LGA.net.

The process is documented under a number of basic steps as shown on right.

Initiate
the process

1

Catalogue and review
existing business services and
existing customer service/
corporate planning systems

2

Consult with your local
business community

3

**Establish appropriate
standards** for the delivery
of each business service

4

Explore remedies for
failing to comply with
the business charter

5

Develop and implement
a complaints and feedback
handling procedure/system

6

Elicit feedback on the
draft business charter

7

**Publish, promote and
ensure access** to the
business charter

8

**Monitor, document,
evaluate and review**

9

*The following pages show
a more detailed description
of how to proceed.*

1



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*Involve all staff from
your organisation
to ensure ownership of
the final product.*

Initiate the process

The first step in implementing the business charter is to initiate or ‘kick off’ the process. A good starting point is to establish a ‘steering committee’ comprising representatives from all areas of your council. The steering committee should drive the development of the business charter. You should assign responsibility for the charter to a single officer, preferably within your corporate planning or business and economic development area.

The steering committee will need to initially set an achievable timeline for completion and determine the level of resources required. A significant part of the business charter process involves consultation, an activity that can be both time and resource consuming. It will be important for the

steering committee to be mindful of this. The councils in the pilot study considered three months as the minimum time-frame necessary to prepare the charter and consult with local businesses.

It will also be necessary for the process to more broadly involve all staff from your organisation to ensure ownership of the final product. To achieve this, the steering committee will need to keep staff informed of progress in developing the charter. It may also be useful for the committee to get staff comments on the timetable for developing the charter.

TIPS for Step 1

Ideally, the Steering Committee should include people knowledgeable in the areas of economic and business development, building and development applications, and customer service.

It should also include a member of the council’s management team. If the council has a Business Enterprise Centre or Regional Development Board in the area, this group should also be represented on the Steering Committee.

Obtaining commitment from people not involved in the development of the charter is critical, as these people will be involved in delivering services within the specified guaranteed times.

Therefore, any opportunity to discuss the charter in staff meetings and other gatherings of staff should be taken. A simple PowerPoint presentation to introduce the concept of business charters can be found on LGA.net or obtained from the LGA. Appendix IV, also contains other useful tools to help councils prepare business charters.

As it can be hard to maintain the commitment to completing the charter within the timeframe identified at the outset, it can be useful to **partner with another council** so that the two councils develop their charters concurrently and can provide support and constructive criticism to each other.

Catalogue and review

existing business services and
existing customer service/corporate
planning systems

2

Step 2 of the process requires documentation of your business services. This includes not only direct 'business assistance' services, but also those indirect services such as planning approvals and waste removal, etc. It is also important that you catalogue those services that have been outsourced. A template for gathering this information is included as one of the tools in Appendix IV.

Once you have compiled a comprehensive list, the steering committee should look critically at those services provided and determine if:

- Any are unnecessary;
- Any overlap exists between services, so that some can be consolidated;
- The list is comprehensive.

It is important for the business charter to fit comfortably within your existing customer service framework and corporate planning process. Your services and a commitment to a standard of delivery should be consistent with the overall priorities of your council. More particularly, these standards should contribute to your ability to fulfil these priorities. Thus, a review of your existing customer service and corporate planning systems will provide important information that can be used to ensure the development of a complementary product.

TIPS for Step 2

The pilot councils found this the most critical task in preparing the charter, as it enabled them to scrutinise what they do for businesses.

It also enabled discussion between different departments about their roles and increased internal understanding about the range of services provided by councils.

Preparing this catalogue carefully and comprehensively makes the preparation of the charter an easy step, as councils are able to summarise what has been prepared into a draft charter.

Councils without a customer service framework can also use this catalogue as a starting point for developing an internal customer service framework.

Make sure your services and commitment to a standard of delivery is consistent with the overall priorities of your council.

Consult with the local business community

3

Initiate the process

Catalogue and review existing business services and existing customer service/corporate planning systems

Consult with your local business community

Establish appropriate standards for the delivery of each business service

Explore remedies for failing to comply with the business charter

Develop and implement a complaints and feedback handling procedure/system

Elicit feedback on the draft business charter

Publish, promote and ensure access to the business charter

Monitor, document, evaluate and review

It is essential that you consult extensively with the local business community when developing your business charter. It will be important for you to know what your customers expect from you.

Consultation will also assist you to gain a picture of your historic performance in servicing local business, ie what your strengths and weaknesses have been to date.

In addition, this step provides the opportunity to inform businesses of the various activities of your council and possible constraints on service delivery, thus ensuring that the expectations of business are realistic.

Consultation should be undertaken at this stage of the business charter process in order to seek advice on:

- The services to be included in your charter;
- Appropriate standards for service delivery;
- Appropriate remedies;
- The effectiveness of the existing complaints handling mechanism;
- A suitable method for evaluating and reviewing the charter.

Consultation can be facilitated through a variety of mechanisms, the most common being:

- Mail;
- Telephone;
- Face to face meetings; and/or,
- Focus groups.

Councils should make use of existing mechanisms and programs to consult with businesses. This might include business breakfasts, business advisory councils, email contacts, newsletters and regular columns in local papers.

The steering committee will need to develop a strategy for consulting with local business. The committee will also need to prioritise the key information it wishes to extract from the business community.

It will be essential that consultation is undertaken in a manner which is not overly disruptive to the activities of business.

TIPS for Step 3

When considering consultation mechanisms, think about the level of contact the council already has with business.

If the contact is minimal or occasional, the most useful feedback will be through small group discussions with targeted businesses invited to a special meeting to discuss the charter. If the council has extensive contact, perhaps because of an Export Centre, use the mechanisms that have been established for this group, so that consultation is not placing an additional burden on local businesses.

The Steering Committee should ensure that it has the opportunity for meaningful consultation with business and should not underestimate the time required. This process can be good public relations for the council and a tangible part of the council's commitment to better serving the needs of business.

Draft the Charter

and develop appropriate standards for the delivery of each business service

4

TIPS for Step 4

The style of the charter should be an early consideration.

An approach used by councils in the pilot project was to start with “We will ...”, then to say “You need to ...” so that there is also a clear obligation on businesses for certain performance.

Service standards is the area which provided the most difficulty for councils in the pilot project.

Their difficulty was in establishing reasonable standards and then monitoring the achievement of these standards. It was considered better to include a standard that could be met easily, eg “We will respond to your written enquiries within 10 business days and to your telephone enquiries within one business day” than to over promise.

Some councils chose not to include any service standards as they felt they could not be sure that all areas of the council could meet these standards.

However, in areas where there were established standards, such as graffiti reports, damage to trees, etc, these were included and other areas left without standards.

Some councils chose to include universal standards for all areas (eg 10 working days for written responses and one working day for telephone responses) and others specified standards for each area of work.

As these standards should be audited (and in many instances will become performance indicators) it is important to make them easy to audit.

It is also useful to refer to the variety of approaches taken by the pilot councils.

Using the information gathered in preparing the catalogue, draft the business charter. Each of the pilot Councils adopted a different format for their charter. It is important that the style makes sense for your council. Should the charter be formal or chatty in style? Another important consideration at this time is the size and format of the charter. You need to consider if the charter will be placed in brochure racks or on counters, and if it will be mailed to businesses. These considerations will influence decisions about the size of the charter.

Developing service standards is the most critical step in the development of business charters if the charter is to have credibility. Your standards of service delivery will be where the business community will see a tangible benefit.

In setting your standards remember that you need to provide a balance between the expectations of businesses and your existing capability. You must choose your standards such that they are:

- Achievable (consult with your staff on their capacity to comply with standards);
- Measurable (to ensure that your performance against them can be assessed); and,
- Appropriate (ie, they must meet the needs of business).

It may be that in the first version of the charter you use generalised statements such as ‘we will respond to your requests for information in a reasonable timeframe’ if you cannot be sure that you can meet prescribed service standards. This is appropriate only if you make a commitment to determine what is a ‘reasonable timeframe’ and include this in the next version of the charter.

The standards will also need to be consistent with the:

- Overall strategy of the organisation (see Step 2 re the review of customer service and corporate planning systems); and,
- Conditions of any outsourcing contracts.

Examples of possible standards are provided in the ‘model’ charter in Appendix I of this guide and in the charters of the councils in the pilot project.

Explore remedies

for failing to comply with standards

5

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failing to comply with
the business charter

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a complaints and feedback
handling procedure/system

Elicit feedback on the
draft business charter

**Publish, promote and
ensure access** to the
business charter

**Monitor, document,
evaluate and review**

Discussion on the use of remedies for non-compliance with your business charter standards may cause some anxiety. In the business charter, “penalties”, remedies and other responses are acts of restitution that come into play when you fail to meet your stated objectives.

In the private sector, they are considered an essential component of the charter and ensure a public commitment and accountability. However, they may be less important for your council. Of the six councils involved in the pilot study, none have included remedies.

Generally, this was due to the lack of concern for remedies by the business community. They did not want a remedy but the task undertaken in the timeframe. Accordingly, this section is considered optional.

There are a number of ways in which remedies or other responses can be applied. In choosing the most appropriate remedy or response to adopt, it will be important for you to determine what businesses see as being appropriate. Remedies should be an area of discussion when you meet with businesses to discuss the charter.

Generally speaking, remedies or other responses can be of either a monetary or non-monetary nature. Non-monetary means of restitution will be appropriate in circumstances where your council has failed to deliver a service at your stated standard, but this has not resulted in any financial implications to the business(es) involved. In such circumstances appropriate remedies could be:

- Delivery of the service as soon as possible;
- Prompt provision of an alternative service;
- Access to an alternative service provider.

Alternatively, financial remedies can be adopted for circumstances where a financial cost has been incurred by a business, or businesses, as a result of failure to comply with the business charter. Financial remedies can include:

- Part or full waiving of a fee that would otherwise be paid for the service;
- Credit for future services.

TIPS for Step 5

This area caused considerable discussion amongst the pilot councils.

They considered the restitution offered by commercial groups, such as AAMI and Telstra, but considered such approaches inappropriate. The alternative was to be sure that the service could be provided within the service guarantee so that there was no need for a penalty or remedy.

See Appendix IV for a web link to the AAMI and Telstra service guarantees.

6



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4

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5

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6

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7

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*Regular feedback from
your business clients
will be important for
your organisation's
ongoing improvement.*

Develop and implement a complaints and feedback handling procedure/system

Regular feedback from your business clients will be important for your organisation's ongoing improvement. It will also assist you to monitor and comply with your charter.

A good charter provides clear feedback mechanisms. The more complaints and or queries that can be resolved in the first instance through an effective and efficient complaints handling system, the less overall cost to your council and the higher the degree of customer satisfaction.

In developing an appropriate complaints handling procedure there are a number of principles that should be satisfied. Details of these principles, as well as other information on complaints handling mechanisms are available in the following documents:

- The Australian Standard for Complaints Handling, AS 4269 (1995), available through Standards Australia, **telephone: (08) 8373 4140;**

- 'A Good Practice Guide for Effective Complaint Handling', is available through the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office and on its web site as a "pdf" file **www.comb.gov.au/publications_information/Special_Reports/good_practice.pdf**.

All councils must have "competition complaints" mechanisms in place as a result of National Competition Policy. This is essential as a State Competition Complaints Commissioner (pursuant to the Government Business SA Enterprises (Competition) Act) is unable to deal with a complaint against a council unless it has been first dealt with by the council's review mechanism.

Section 270 of the new Local Government Act requires councils to publish information about their complaints procedure. This section of the Act is included in Appendix IV as one of the tools. The LGA has produced a "Model

Procedure" for internal review of Council decisions to assist Councils to comply with both Section 270 of the Local Government Act and competition complaints requirements. It is available on LGA.net or from the LGA (8224 2000).

Councils may also like to use the services of the Office of the Small Business Advocate in their charters, **telephone: 8221 6120, facsimile: 8221 6106,** country callers: **1800 240 489,** website: **www.osba.on.net,** email: **osba@osba.on.net,** address: **74 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000** to assist with resolving disputes with local businesses.

TIPS for Step 6

As councils are required to have a complaints mechanism to comply with the Local Government Act 1999, it is appropriate for the complaints mechanism for services to businesses to match the requirements of the Act.

Developing a complaints mechanism is a large project in itself and councils without such a mechanism should talk with those who have them to understand the complexity and time involved in developing one. Both Salisbury and Charles Sturt Councils have customer complaint systems. LGA model documents may also assist.

Elicit feedback on the Draft Business Charter

TIPS for Step 7

If you are working with another council in partnership to prepare the charter, discuss each other's drafts and provide constructive criticism.

If you are working alone on the draft, ask one of the councils involved in the pilot project to comment on it

The pilot councils found that they received very little comment on the final draft, but the comments received were very helpful.

At this stage, businesses understand the objectives of the charter and have already had input into the contents, so provide little additional comment.

7

At this point you should have a draft business charter. To ensure, however, that the product is appropriate, it will be necessary to seek some feedback from the business community.

To achieve this, it is recommended that you adopt a more informal consultative approach than outlined in Step 3. Possible mechanisms that can be used to gain feedback on the draft include:

- Advertising for expressions of interest in your local newspaper;
- Distributing copies of the draft to businesses;

- Establishing a small focus group of representative businesses on which to test the draft. This could be the same group which met previously or you may choose to invite selected businesses to comment on it; and/or,
- Making copies available over the counter at your council chambers.

The aim of this activity is to test your charter before it is finalised and becomes operational.

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**Monitor, document,
evaluate and review**

Publish and ensure access to your Business Charter

8

Once finalised, your business charter will need to be disseminated to the local business community. It will also be necessary to ensure that your staff are aware of the charter and the commitments and penalties contained within it.

Your steering committee will need to develop a comprehensive promotional strategy for the charter.

Methods of promotion that could be considered include:

- Launching it at a special event (or as part of a regular activity with businesses)

- Publishing the charter as a document and mailing it out to local businesses;
- Advertising in your local Messenger or country newspaper;
- Incorporating it in your regular newsletters;
- Publishing it on the council's website, etc;
- Holding seminars for staff on the content of the charter.

In finalising a strategy for promotion, reasonable consideration will need to be given to the relative accessibility of the charter, noting that some business, particularly small business, may not have access to some mediums, such as the Internet.

TIPS for Step 8

This is an opportunity for councils to present businesses with a package of their services.

This could include a directory of local businesses, a calendar of events and elected member details.

Your steering committee will need to develop a comprehensive promotional strategy for the charter.

9



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Monitor, document, evaluate and review

TIPS for Step 9

Performance standards in the charter need to be monitored.

To the extent possible, they should be incorporated into the council's corporate plan so that monitoring is undertaken as part of that process.

The council should take the opportunity at regular gatherings of businesses to ask for comment on the charter.

In this way, businesses will know that councils are concerned to both monitor and improve their services to business.

As with all programs administered by your council, it will be important for you to undertake regular evaluations of the effectiveness of the business charter and your compliance with it.

Your complaints handling procedure will provide a mechanism by which to monitor compliance on a day to day basis. However, an annual comprehensive evaluation of your performance against the charter and its overall appropriateness will need to also be completed in order to identify opportunities to enhance the charter or individual performance measures and improve accountability.

The outcomes of evaluation should be reported publicly.

Formal evaluation will involve many of the steps you undertook in initially developing the charter.

The outcomes of evaluation should be reported publicly and the results used to decide on whether any amendments to the charter are necessary.

Model Business Charter

Introduction

The introductory segment of the business charter should provide the target audience with an overview as to the purpose and objectives as well as its broad content. The introduction should also include a commitment from the Chief Executive Officer to ensure compliance with the charter.

Example:

The success of businesses in our local area is of significant importance to the rest of the local community. We have a role in assisting businesses by providing services in an efficient and timely manner. This business charter sets out our commitment to you to provide a timely and efficient service to your business. We will ensure that our performance in complying with this charter is monitored on a regular basis and we will report on our performance.

If you have any feedback or complaints to make please utilise our complaints handling system which is outlined in this charter. It is only through your regular feedback that we can continue to improve our level of service to the business community.

Signed, Chief Executive Officer.

Overview of Services and Standards for Delivery

This section of the service charter should document those services that you provide to businesses. In addition, some commitment as to your standards of delivering these services should also be listed. Services provided should be categorised under similar headings.

Example:

- Administrative and Regulatory Functions

We communicate with business in fulfilling the following administrative and regulatory functions:

- Processing and approving development applications under the Development Act;
- Administering local by laws;
- Processing of licence fees.

- We will:

- Ensure that all licence and planning applications are acknowledged in writing on date of receipt;
- Provide details of the likely timeframe in which the application will be processed in acknowledging receipt of your application;
- Provide reasons for any likely delays.

- Payment of Invoices

When we purchase goods and services from businesses the resultant invoice will be subject to the principles of this charter.

In payment of invoices we will:

- Ensure that they are processed under normal commercial terms as agreed with the supplier;
- Ensure that all invoices are paid within 30 days;

- Ensure that, if the invoice is to be disputed, the supplier will be informed in writing within 21 days after receipt of the account

- Communications

Communication with us can occur in a variety of ways, particularly via:

- Telephone;
- Facsimile;
- Email; and,
- Correspondence.

Where you communicate with us in the above forms, we will:

- Respond to written communications within 14 days of receipt;
- Respond to telephone communications within 24 hours;
- Ensure that a single point of contact is maintained within our organisation for all business enquiries;
- Ensure that all communication is treated in the strictest of confidence;
- Ensure that all information provided to us is utilised only for its intended purpose.

Remedies for Failing to Comply with Standards

This section of the business charter should provide the reader with information on the steps your council will take to rectify problems caused by failing to comply with your set standards. The section should also provide details about how a business can access your complaints handling procedures.

Example:

If you are not happy with the level of service that we are providing, or if we have not fulfilled our promise to you, please – insert in here details on how to access your complaints handling mechanism.

In cases where we have failed to meet the standards outlined in this charter, we will:

- In cases where we have failed to deliver a service to you within the timeframe specified, provide you with an alternative service provider free of charge;
- In cases where we have failed to process a licence within the specified timeframe, waiver the fee for the licence and process it as a matter of urgency.

List of Contacts

The contacts section of your business charter should include contact details (ie phone, fax, email and possibly a contact name) for each of your main service areas. Your contact details should also outline the opening times of your offices.

Consultation

The final part of the business charter should contain some details about who you consulted in developing it. This will provide a level of credibility to the final document and let businesses in your area know that the standards contained in the charter are ones that were considered appropriate by business people.

Appendix II –

Principles for a

Business Contact Officer

When developing an appropriate complaints handling system for your council (as per Step 6 above), you may want to consider introducing a contact officer(s) as a single point of contact for all business inquiries. Such a contact officer would not only handle complaints from businesses, but also other more general requests for information.

Such a contact officer framework could be structured either in the form of a single officer who's sole function is that of answering business queries, or in the form of a dedicated officer within each distinctive section of your council who could take on this function as part of their responsibilities. In fact, there are many ways in which such an initiative could be adopted, depending on the existing structure of your council.

In further developing an approach for implementing a business contact officer, it will be important for the approach adopted to be consistent with the following basic principles:

- Businesses should only need to query one officer within a council in order to source the requisite information;
- If the contact officer cannot directly answer a query, they should take down the relevant details and either resolve the issue themselves by consulting appropriate officers within the council, or get an appropriate officer to contact the business to further discuss their issue;
- If the business query involves a number of elements, the business contact officer should ensure that advice is provided back to the business in a consolidated form, incorporating responses to all elements of the issue;
- The business should receive a response to its query within at least 48 hours. If this deadline cannot be met, the contact officer should elicit an estimated deadline and advise the business of this within 48 hours; and,
- The contact officer should ensure that any response to a businesses' query is consistent with similar advice on the matter provided to other parties. It will also be important to ensure that all advice is consistent with and complies with the obligations set out in your business charter.

Appendix III – Obtaining Business Charters

developed as part of the Pilot Project

In mid 1999, a pilot project involving South Australian councils trialled the development of Business Charters using the process explained in this guide. The councils nominated for involvement and six were chosen, representing metropolitan, regional and rural, small and large councils. Those involved were:

- City of Charles Sturt (large, metropolitan council, supporting an Exporters' Club and involved with a Business Enterprise Centre)
- Town of Gawler (small rural council on edge of metropolitan area)
- Le Hunte District Council (small rural council covering a large area)
- Port Pirie Regional Council (regional council in rural area)
- City of Salisbury (large, metropolitan council)
- City of West Torrens (middle-sized metropolitan council with established program for local businesses)

The charters developed by each council are different and reflect their different circumstances and the nature of their relationship with local businesses. The Le Hunte Council is the only council not to prepare a separate charter document. Its charter has been incorporated into the Council Policy Manual that is distributed to all ratepayers. Le Hunte, as a council in a low population area, has services which are well known to its community, and after discussion with its constituents decided that a separate document was unnecessary.

The Business Charters for each council are available from the Councils concerned or (along with other Council charters supplied to the LGA) on LGA.net. Contact details are included in each charter for the people who have prepared these charters. Please feel free to contact them to discuss their charters.

This guide and the charters can currently be found by Councils on www.lganet.sa.gov.au in “General Information” under “Codes and Guidelines” and the guide is more widely available on www.lga.sa.gov.au.

The Government of South Australia funded this pilot project, with the support of the Local Government Association of South Australia.

Appendix IV –

Development tools

for Business Charters

The following tools may assist councils when preparing Business Charters. Tools 2 and 5 follow in this booklet and the others are available online or from the Local Government Association.

- 1 “What is a Business Charter?” – PowerPoint presentation (available on LGA.net or from the LGA – 8224 2000).
- 2 Template for cataloguing and reviewing services to business
- 3 AAMI Customer Charter (www.aami.com.au/about/fabout.htm)
- 4 Telstra Service Guarantee (www.telstra.com.au/csg)
- 5 S. 270, Local Government Act

Tool 2: Template for Cataloguing and Reviewing Services to Business

Council: Example		Division: Planning and Library			
Service	Activities/tasks	How it is delivered?	By whom?	Performance measures	Comments
Statutory planning permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant is encouraged to meet with planning staff prior to lodging an application Detailed assistance available from staff by appointment Applications can be lodged in person, by mail or electronically If required, notice of the application will be given to adjoining residents Application is either approved by delegated authority by council officers or referred to Planning Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In council offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning staff Clerical assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointments within one week of request Application acknowledged within two days of receipt If application is complete, response within four weeks 	
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer requests assistance with business information Librarian responds immediately or undertakes to complete the search within specified time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally over-the-counter but can be telephone or email request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All searches completed within 3 working days 	

Tool 5: Local Government Act 1999

Section 270 - Council to establish grievance procedures

- (1) A council must establish procedures for the review of decisions of-
 - (a) the council;
 - (b) employees of the council;
 - (c) other persons acting on behalf of the council.
- (2) The procedures must address the following matters (and may address other matters):
 - (a) the manner in which an application for review may be made;
 - (b) the assignment of a suitable person to reconsider a decision under review;
 - (c) the matters that must be referred to the council itself for consideration or further consideration;
 - (d) the notification of the progress and outcome of an application for review;
 - (e) the time frames within which notifications will be made and procedures on a review will be completed.
- (3) A council is not entitled to charge a fee on an application for review.
- (4) A council, or a person assigned to consider the application, may refuse to consider an application for review if-
 - (a) the application is made by an employee of the council and relates to an issue concerning his or her employment; or
 - (b) it appears that the application is frivolous or vexatious; or
 - (c) the applicant does not have a sufficient interest in the matter.
- (5) A council must ensure that copies of a document concerning the procedures that apply under this section are available for inspection (without charge) and purchase (on payment of a fee fixed by the council) by the public at the principal office of the council.
- (6) A council may amend the procedures established by the council under this section from time to time.
- (7) Nothing in this section prevents a person from making a complaint to the Ombudsman at any time under the *Ombudsman Act 1972*.



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