

South Dublin County Council Customer Service Action Plan and Citizens Charter



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Foreword

This Customer Service Action Plan is based on the principle of serving the customer better. It sets out a framework of South Dublin County Council and the work of its Elected Members and staff. It is the Councils Plan for a standard of excellence in public service which our citizens and customers deserve.

The Plan seeks to better facilitate interaction between the Council and those we serve. Improved access to information is a very important part of this process, and this is being facilitated by ongoing technological improvements.

The end result which we want to achieve through all of the procedures and initiatives contained in this Plan, is to empower and encourage our staff to deliver excellence in customer service delivery.

Section 1 - South Dublin County in Context

South Dublin County Council was established in 1994 and is one of the largest Local Authority in Ireland, covering an area of 222.74 square kilometres.

Its population is growing and currently stands at approximately 265,000. The population of the county grew by 11% from 2002 to 2011.

Tallaght is the main urban centre with a population of approximately 80,000. South Dublin County Council is divided into 6 electoral areas with 40 Councillors elected every five years.

The Council has statutory functions and represents the electorate over a range of public issues. They represent the local authority on a range of public agencies and promote the coordination of various public bodies operating locally.

Management Structure

The Executive is headed up by the Chief Executive.

The senior management team consists of five Directors of Service in charge of:

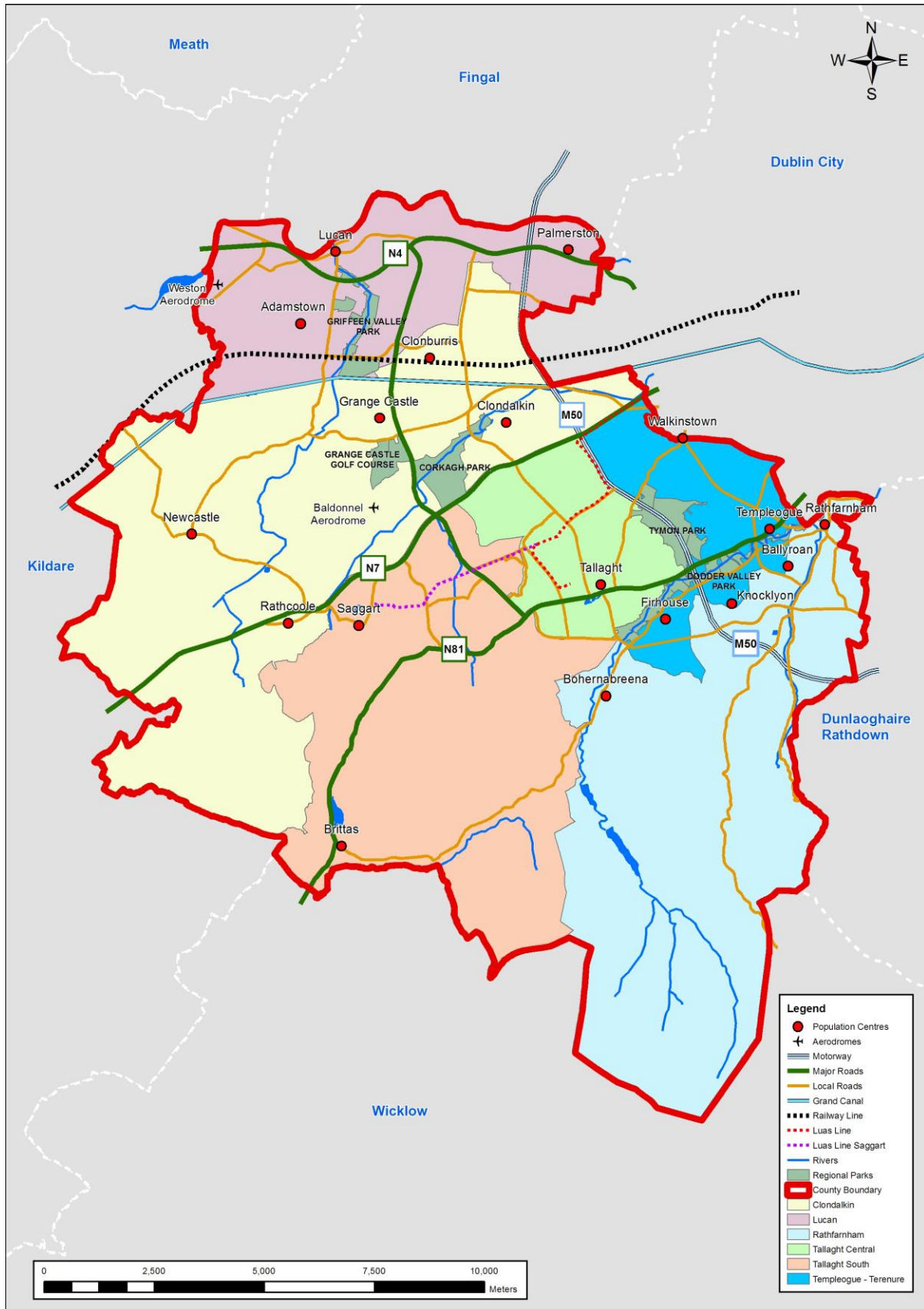
- Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development
- Housing, Social and Community Development
- Environmental, Water and Climate Change
- Land Use Planning and Transportation
- Corporate Performance and Change Management

And the

Head of Finance, Head of Information and Communication Technologies, County Architect and Law Agent.

All of these comprise the Management Team.

Section 2 – Map of South Dublin County



Section 3 - Our Mission Statement, Organisational Values and Quality Service Standards

Corporate Plan

Our corporate plan is a statement of policy covering all aspects of our operations over the 5-year term of our Elected Council. Our Corporate Plan covers the period up 2015 to 2019.

The following extracts from our **Corporate Plan 2015- 2019** specifically relate to how we deal with our citizens / customers.

Our Mission is to 'Make our county the best possible place in which to live work and do business'.

The way we deliver this is through the five key priorities set out in our corporate plan. These are:

- Economic Development
- Quality of Life-health and wellbeing
- Social Inclusion
- Citizen engagement
- Collaboration with others

Our values drive the way we go about this task. These are:

- Value for money
- Accountability and transparency
- Quality service
- Sustainability
- Inclusiveness, equality and accessibility
- Innovation, creativity and diversity

Our mission statement reflects our commitment to enhance the role of the Mayor and Elected Members. This is in order to promote local democracy, and encourage citizens to engage in local decision making processes. Our citizens deserve services that are responsive, efficient, and innovative and meet the need of the individual at every stage of the life cycle. We will continue to push the boundaries in evaluating our processes to identify new ways of doing our business with the use of modern technology.

Quality Service Standards

A core aim of South Dublin County Council is to provide citizens and customers with the highest quality service in an economic, efficient, effective and equitable manner. A customer is any individual, group or organisation who avails of a service or information from the Council.

The Council promises to comply with the following Quality Service Standards:

A. Equality/Diversity

- Ensure that the rights of equal treatment established by equality legislation, are adhered to and that people in similar circumstances, are dealt with in an equal way.
- Identify and work towards eliminating barriers including geographical barriers to access for people experiencing poverty / social exclusion and disabled people.
- Ensure sensitivity having regard to age, disability, cultural diversity and capacity to understand often-complex rules.
- Ensure, where possible and having regard to legal obligations, that rules are not applied so rigidly as to create inequality.

B. Physical Access

- Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, and comply with occupational and safety standards. Ensure a high standard of access for disabled people and others with specific access / support needs.

C. Information

- Provide information that is clear, timely, complete, accurate, available at defined points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific access / support needs.
- Ensure the best possible use of Information and Communications Technology.
- Continue to provide easily understood forms, information leaflets and procedures.
- Translate signs and forms into other languages and formats as required.

D. Timeliness and Courtesy

- Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and minimum delay.
- Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of all ongoing transactions.

E. Customer Care Complaints

- Sometimes the system may not function as well as expected. We will therefore maintain an accessible, transparent and user-friendly customer complaints procedure for people who are dissatisfied with our quality of service.
- The Council will try to learn from its mistakes.

F. Consultation and Evaluation

- Promote meaningful customer involvement in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services using customer panels, customer satisfaction surveys and other innovative approaches.

G. Choice

- Provide choice, where possible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to increase choices for customers.

H. Official Languages and Equality

- Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their rights to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

I. Better Co-ordination

- Encourage a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

J. Internal Customers

- Develop communication channels to support and respond to the important representational, corporate governance and community leadership roles of the Elected Members.
- Ensure that Council staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are afforded the same courtesy, facilities and level of service as external customers.

K. Customer / Citizen's Obligations

In order to facilitate staff to keep the commitments given in these Quality Service Standards:

- Staff should be treated in a courteous, civil and fair manner in all contacts with customers and citizens.
- Customers / citizens should deal with issues that are within their own area of responsibility as detailed in their Tenancy agreement..
- Customers / citizens should understand the Councils responsibility to act in the overall public good.
- Patience is required sometimes when available staff are busy at peak times.

L. Customer Action Plan

- South Dublin County Council has committed to these principles in its Customer Action Plan. The Plan outlines the service each customer and citizen can expect, and what is expected in return. This Plan will be publicly available, particularly at points of service delivery.

Section 4 - Contacting the Council

Our website www.sdcc.ie should be your first point of contact if you are looking for information about the Council and its services. It is an important information resource and contains policy documents, work programmes and documentation in relation to our services. It is information at your fingertips 24/7.

Online: If you wish to make an enquiry, a comment/suggestion or complaint about our operations, you can contact us online through the Customer Care Section of our website. If you use the online form, we will reply to you within 2 working days.

Fix your street: You can report issues under the criteria below:

- Road and footpath maintenance,
- Litter and graffiti removal,
- Drainage or leaks
- Tree and grass maintenance,

These can be submitted direct to www.fixyourstreet.ie. We reply through the Fix your street website to these reports within 2 working days.

Local representatives: You can also send questions or make representations directly to your local Councillors. Contact details for your local Councillors are available on our website at <http://www.sdcc.ie/council/councillors>

In person: If you wish to talk to us in person, we operate Customer Care Centres at County Hall, Tallaght and the Clondalkin Civic Centre. A dedicated team of staff are available to help you with your enquiries. Usually we can deal with your enquiry without the need for onward referral. However, If your enquiry is of a specialised nature, we can of course arrange for you to meet with appropriate staff.

Telephone: A dedicated team is available to answer your telephone enquiries without onward referral. The contact telephone number for all our services is 01-4149000

Our main public offices are open from 9am.to 5pm. Monday to Thursday and up to 4:30pm on Friday.

The Payments offices in County Hall Tallaght and the Clondalkin Civic Centre are open from 9:30am to 3:30pm, and through lunch hour.

An emergency contact number is available after hours and weekends. The number is **01 4574907**.

Social Media

The Council has an official Facebook and Twitter page. These pages are not monitored on a 24/7 basis and should not be used to report an emergency. Contact details for emergencies can be found at [Emergency Contacts | South Dublin County Council](#)

These pages serve as another communication channel for South Dublin County Council to communicate with members of the public, in addition to engaging with the community directly, and using traditional media and our website.

We welcome comments, but as these are the official pages of an organisation serving the public, we do need to moderate them. We will therefore delete the following:

- Obscene, abusive, discriminatory or accusatory comments about any individuals or organisations.
- Any political commentary or debate.
- Comment or discussion on any matter that is before the courts.
- Any misinformation which contradicts public safety or security advice or information.

We will also delete:

- Comments which contain obscene language.
- Comments which aim to incite illegal activity.
- Comments which do not comply with the terms of usage of this site.

South Dublin County Council is not responsible for content posted by members of the public.

Section 5 - The Response you can expect - Standards of Service

E-Mail / Web Enquiries / Fix Your Street

We will:

- Acknowledge immediately and issue a response within 2 working days. If this is not possible, we will state when we hope to be able to do so. We will also explain the reason for the delay.
- Write as clearly as possible
- Only use technical terms where it is absolutely necessary
- Ensure that all interactions give contact name and details
- Respond in Irish to letters received in Irish

Written Correspondence

We will try to:

- Acknowledge within 3 working days and issue a full reply within 15 working days. If this is not possible, we will state when we hope to be able to do so. We will also explain the reason for the delay
- Write as clearly as possible
- Only use technical terms where it is absolutely necessary
- Ensure that all interactions give contact name and details
- Respond in Irish to letters received in Irish

Telephone

We will try to:

- Answer quickly and courteously
- Provide the information required in a helpful manner
- Deal with the enquiry without passing the call to another extension
- Take your enquiry, e-mail address and telephone number and write or call back if the enquiry cannot be answered quickly
- Indicate when you can expect to hear from us and arrange to call at a time, which is convenient to you
- Give contact names in all telephone communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions
- Provide a voice mail service for staff who are out of their office. Voice mail calls in normal circumstances will be returned within 1 day
- Ensure the call forwarding system is used when people are absent.

Callers to Public Offices

We will try to:

- Ensure all frontline staff wear name badges
- Deal with the enquiries as quickly as possible
- Respect your privacy and provide private interview rooms at public offices where possible
- Ensure that queues are kept to a minimum
- Keep our offices safe, clean, and accessible, particularly for disabled people
- Prominently display our hours of service in all public offices/counters
- Provide a translation service for people whose first language is not

- English
- Facilitate a remote sign language interpretation service using ooVoo technology
- Provide Induction Loop facilities for people who are hard of hearing

Forms and leaflets

We will try to:

- Use simple and clear language in forms and leaflets
- Arrange for forms to be provided in Braille, large print and other formats
- Explain precisely what is required from you
- Not ask unnecessary questions
- Make forms and leaflets freely available
- Provide text in Irish as well as English
- Review forms and leaflets regularly
- Make them available in electronic format and facilitate on-line application

Applications/Claims

We will try to:

- Make application forms available in electronic format
- Make a decision as quickly as possible on receipt of a valid application
- Deal with all applications equally and in accordance with our policies
- Give reasons for our decisions
- Advise you of your right to, and procedures for, an appeal of our decision

Information and Openness

We will try to:

- Supply our customers with all the information needed to deal with the enquiry
- Provide information that is clear, timely and accurate and meets the needs of all our customers
- Provide information about services and schemes in clear plain language
- Try to help as best we can if another organisation is involved

Courtesy and Consideration

Whether your business is conducted in person, by e-mail, by telephone or by post we acknowledge that you are at all times entitled to be served:

- Without delay and in a polite manner
- With due regard to privacy and confidentiality
- By friendly and helpful staff

Services in Irish

All customers have the right to do their business with South Dublin County Council through the Irish or English language. Our objective is to offer and provide services through both languages.

Seirbhísí i nGaeilge

Tá sé de cheart ag custaiméirí a gcuid gnó a dhéanamh le Comhairle Contae Átha Cliath Theas trí Ghaeilge nó trí Bhéarla. Tá sé mar aidhm againn seirbhísí a chur ar fáil sa dá theanga.

Section 6 - Our County

South Dublin County Council is a public service provider. This means that our role is to be of real service to our citizens. We want to improve your quality of life and your physical environment in ways that do not compromise the quality of life for future generations.

If we are to achieve this then we need to work in partnership with you. This is a two way relationship and there is much that you can do to help.

This is what society expects from you:

Protect your environment

Litter

- Keep our streets clean. Put litter into on-street litter bins or take it home and put it in your wheelie bin.
- Adopt the public footpath and grass margin in front of your home or business premises. Sweep it clean and cut the grass on a regular basis.

Fly Tipping

- Keep our countryside clean and beautiful by only using registered removal companies to get rid of builder's rubble, old fridges, white goods and furniture. You can safely get rid of unwanted appliances at our Civic Amenity Centre in Ballymount.

Recycle

- Reduce, reuse, recycle — Use your green bin and your local Civic Recycling Centres.

Water Supply

- Irish Water is the new national water utility responsible for the delivery of water services to homes and businesses in Ireland. Please contact Irish Water for more information, or to report and issue with:
 - Water supply
 - Water quality
 - Wastewater

The contact details for Irish Water are: Irish Water, PO Box 860, South City, Delivery Office, Cork City.

Web: www.water.ie

Twitter: @IrishWater

Telephone: 1890 278 278 (LoCall)

Minicom: 1890 378 378 (For hearing impaired customers with Minicom equipment)

- Please continue to contact South Dublin County Council for information or issues relating to business account queries, surface water drainage and flood management.

Rivers and Streams

- Adopt (with your neighbours or work mates) a stretch of river or stream that flows through your estate or businesses lands. Keep it clean by removing litter and debris on a regular basis.
- Keep our rivers and streams fresh and pure. Don't throw old household items or shopping trolleys into them.

Dogs/Pets

- Keep your pet under control at all times. Don't let your dog or pet wander or stray in public areas. If it fouls the public park, open space or footpath, use your scooper or bag to pick it up and bring it home for safe disposal.

Parks and Open Spaces

- Share the enjoyment of our public parks and open spaces. Don't interfere with the enjoyment of others by being aggressive, playing loud music, drinking alcohol or any activity that will annoy and upset the enjoyment of others.

Trees and Public Planting

- Respect our public planting schemes. They are there for the benefit of everybody. Don't damage or destroy public street planting, trees or flowerbeds.

Drive carefully

Speed

- Respect the speed limits and drive with care especially in built up areas, near schools, play areas, churches or shopping centres.

Drink Driving

- Respect life and Arrive Alive - do not drink and drive.

Car Parking

- Do not park on open spaces/grass verges, or footpaths. These areas

are for pedestrians not vehicles. Do not park in accessible parking spaces. These are for disabled drivers and passengers who have official EU Disabled Persons Parking Permits (Blue Badge).

Be a good neighbour

Neighbours

- Be a good neighbour. Treat your neighbour, as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Know where your children are at all times and make sure that they understand the need to respect other people and their property.
- Make where you live a better place because of you. Get involved and play your part in the life of your community.

Social Housing

- Tell us about any changes that happen in your family or housing circumstances.
- Pay your rent on time. If you run into any difficulties let us know in good time so that we can take action to help you.
- Honour the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Section 7 - Complaints Handling System

We will investigate all complaints in a fair and impartial way. We will treat your complaint confidentially and only discuss it with relevant staff on a "need to know" basis. If you make a complaint we will not meet it with hostility or defensiveness. We understand that complaints can generate positive and helpful discussion about the services we provide.

Complaint files will be kept separately from any relevant files within individual service areas (*for example housing, planning, environment, and so on.*). The making of a complaint will not in any way affect your future dealings with the Council.

We want to resolve your problem to the best of our ability and your satisfaction. We want to learn from our mistakes. This complaint handling system provides valuable feedback and helps us to provide a better service in the future.

How to Make an Enquiry/Complaint

We aim to provide high-quality services for all members of the public. We accept that things can sometimes go wrong and we need to know when you are not happy with our service.

When you tell us what you are not happy with, we can try to put things right. In future, we can try to get it right first time.

We will treat your complaint seriously and deal with your complaint positively. We see any complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.

What is a complaint?

A Complaint is when you tell us you're not happy. For example, If:

- We do not deliver a service on time,
- We give you the wrong Information,
- You receive a poor quality service,
- You have a complaint about a member of staff, or
- You have a complaint about our policy

Our Commitment

We are committed to putting you first and providing a quality customer service. This includes dealing with any complaint you may have.

- We will deal with your complaint quickly and fairly.

- We will tell you what is happening with your complaint and we will do everything we can to help you.
- We will treat the information you give us in confidence.
- We will explain our decision.
- We will use complaints to review and improve the way we provide services.
- If you make a complaint, it will not affect your rights to receive or use a council service.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint by:

- completing our [on-line form](#)
- emailing info@sdublincoco.ie
- phoning 01 4149000 from 9am to 5pm (Monday to Thursday and 9am - 4.30pm on Fridays)
- visiting our Customer Care Centres in person at County Hall, Tallaght or Clondalkin Civic Centre
- writing to: Corporate Performance and Change Management Department. South Dublin County Council County Hall, Tallaght, Dublin 24

If you prefer, you can ask another person, a friend or relative to deal with us on your behalf.

When you make a complaint, please give us your complete contact information; tell us your name and address, your phone number and your email address if you have one.

Complaints Process

Informal complaint - Step 1

We will try to deal with your complaint informally. This means that you should phone or take your complaint to the office or person who dealt with your enquiry.

Our staff will do their best to settle your complaint without you needing to do anything else.

Formal complaint - Step 2

If you have spoken to the relevant officer about your complaint and they have not been able to put things right, or you are not happy with the result, the next step is for you to make a formal complaint. Your complaint will now be dealt with by the Manager of the service involved.

Please make your complaint by completing our [on-line form](#), emailing info@sdublincoco.ie, or by writing to Corporate Performance and Change Management Department, South Dublin County Council, County Hall,

Tallaght, Dublin 24. Please make sure that you give us your complete contact information, tell us your name and address, your phone number and your email address if you have one.

We will contact to you within three working days to let you know we have received your complaint. We will give you a reference number and the name of the person investigating your complaint. This information will make it easier for you to contact us if you need to.

We will:

- Investigate your complaint;
- Take any necessary action; and
- Contact you within 15 working days to explain our decision and to tell you the outcome of your complaint.

If your complaint will take longer to investigate, and so we cannot send you a reply within 15 working days, we will write to you and let you know when you will receive a reply.

Complaint Review - Step 3

If you have been through the formal complaint process at Step 2 of the Complaints Procedure and you are still not happy with the outcome, you can contact the Customer Care Officer in relation to the service about which you have a complaint. The Customer Care Officer will confirm within five working days that we have received your complaint. The Customer Care Officer will then arrange for your complaint to be considered by a more senior member of staff in the relevant Department.

We will contact you within 20 working days with a full written reply.

Office of the Ombudsman

If you feel like you've been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman. By law the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in your dealings with us. The Ombudsman provides an impartial, independent and free dispute resolution service.

Complaints may be made in writing, by telephone, by calling to the Ombudsman's Office, by email or by using the on-line complaint form.

You must send in all relevant documentation or correspondence.

The Office of the Ombudsman is located at 18 Lower Leeson Street., Dublin 2. It is open between 9.15am and 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and between 9.15am and 5.15pm on Friday

Telephone: 01 6395600 or Lo-Call 1-890-223030 (from outside 01 area)
Fax: 01 6395674; Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

You can find more details about the Local Government Ombudsman on the website: www.ombudsman.ie

Disability Act 2005 – Inquiry Officer

Local authorities are required under the Disability Act to appoint an Inquiry Officer. It is the Inquiry Officer's responsibility to deal with any complaints received in relation Sections 25 to 29 of the Disability Act 2005:

- Section 25 Access to Public Buildings
- Section 26 Access to services
- Section 27 Accessibility of services supplied to a public body
- Section 28 Access to information
- Section 29 Access to heritage sites

Investigations by South Dublin County Council's Inquiry Officer will be conducted in private, in an independent manner, in accordance with Section 39 of the Disability Act, 2005. All reports issued will set out the findings of the Inquiry Officer and will include a declaration regarding whether:

- the complaint has merit; and
- there has been a fault by the Local Authority in relation to the matter complained of.

Where a failure is identified, the Inquiry Officer's report will also outline the steps to be taken to ensure future compliance.

If you feel that the local authority has failed to comply with any or all of sections 25 to 29 of the Act and you wish to make a complaint, please make your complaint in person, in writing, by phone, fax, e-mail, or with an assistant, to the Councils Inquiry Officer. Complaints should be submitted or made through the Councils Customer Care Centres or online services (see contact details listed on page 12 of this Plan).

Section 40 of the Disability Act, 2005 makes provision for appeals regarding decisions / recommendations of Inquiry Officers. If you are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, you can contact the Office of the Ombudsman (see Office of the Ombudsman section above)

Your Local Councillor

You can also contact your local County Councillor to assist you in your dealings with the Council. Contact details are available on <http://www.sdcc.ie/council/councillors>

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act is designed to provide a right of access to information held by public bodies to the greatest extent possible. However, the Acts, by making certain exceptions, seek to achieve a balance between this right of access, on the one hand, and, on the other, the right to privacy and in some cases the public interest in maintaining confidentiality.

Freedom of Information is about customer service and ensuring that our operations and procedures are transparent and readily open to public scrutiny.

Freedom of Information application forms and details of fees payable are also available on our website www.sdcc.ie

Data Protection

Data Protection aims to protect individuals' right to privacy in regard to the processing of their personal data by those who control such data. The legislation governing this is the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 which lay down rules about the safeguarding of the privacy of personal data, covering such areas as the obtaining, processing, keeping, use, disclosure, accuracy, appropriateness, retention and an individual's right to access and correct their personal data. The legislation applies to personal data held in both manual and electronic format.

Data Protection information which contains information, publications and other resources which are of interest to members of the public at this link [Data Protection | South Dublin County Council](#)

Compliments, Comments and Suggestions

As well as learning from complaints, we want to know any ideas you might have to help us improve our services. You can do this by telling a member of staff about your comment or suggestion, by writing to us or by completing the online [comment/suggestion form](#) on our webpage.