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1. Preface

- The following procedure applies to complaints directly related to services and processes within the City Clerk's Office jurisdiction.
- Certain services and processes, which may be provided by the City Clerk's Office or may relate to the services provided by the City Clerk's Office, have a separate right of appeal, statutory remedy or prescribed procedure (see [Appendix A](#)).
- Complaints are reviewed on receipt and complainants are advised if alternate complaint procedures apply.

2. Guiding Principles

- It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- Staff treat complaints as confidential and protect complainant's privacy.
- Review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to parties involved.
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for how decisions on the complaint were made.
- Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

3. Types of Complaint

Definition: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by a City Clerk's Office business unit or staff.

Complaints may relate to the actions of an individual or to a City Clerk's Office policy, process or procedure.

- Examples include but are not limited to:
 - a perceived failure to do something agreed to do;
 - a failure to observe policy or procedures;
 - an error made by staff; or
 - unfair or discourteous actions/statements by staff;
- Anyone personally affected can submit a complaint and it will be reviewed in accordance with this procedure.

4. How a Complaint is Made

- A complaint may be received verbally (in person or telephone) or in writing (received by hand delivery, mail, fax or email).
- The complainant may use the Public Complaint [form](#) to submit their complaint however this form is not required for this procedure to apply and for the complaint to be received and reviewed.
- An individual acting on another person's behalf on a written complaint is required to complete a [representative consent form](#).

5. Initial Receipt and Handling of Complaint

- Complainants are instructed to direct/address their complaints to the relevant service area.
- If complainants are not sure where to direct their complaints, they are provided addresses of City Clerk's Office general enquiry locations (see below).
- The following procedures apply to receipt and handling in different scenarios.

Received in service area:

- The original version of written complaints, including letters, forms, emails and faxes, are date-stamped and immediately referred to manager of the area and the manager contacts the complainant to acknowledge receipt. See timeline standard below.
- A copy of all written complaints is forwarded to the Management Consultant, Council & Support Services (or designate) for logging and to assign a complaint number.
- Verbal complaints may be dealt with by a frontline staff person with certain exceptions (see below).
- Frontline staff immediately refer written or verbal complaints about another staff member to the person's superior.

- Complaints not within the City Clerk's Office program jurisdiction are forwarded to the appropriate Division and the complainant is advised.
- Anonymous written complaints are referred to the manager.

City Clerk's Office General Enquiry Locations

- Mail location: City Hall 1N (ATTN: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE COMPLAINT). Assigned Council & Support Services staff pick up the complaint, log in the mail registry and deliver a copy of the written complaint to the Management Consultant, Council & Support Services (or designate) for logging and to assign a complaint number.
- Email location: clerk@toronto.ca (ATTN: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE COMPLAINT). Complaints received in this email box are forwarded immediately to assigned Council & Support Services staff to be recorded in the mail registry and redirected to the appropriate person/area. The Management Consultant, Council & Support Services (or designate) is copied on the redirect to determine if the email complaint is subject to the City Clerk's Office Complaint Procedure. If applicable the complaint is logged and assigned a complaint number.
- Fax Complaints: 9W fax number 416-392-1867 (ATTN: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE COMPLAINT). Fax letters are picked up by assigned Council & Support Services staff, recorded in mail registry and a copy of the written complaint forwarded to the Management Consultant, Council & Support Services (or designate) for logging and to assign a complaint number.

6. Complaint Review and Escalation Process

The City Clerk's Office complaint procedure uses a 3 stage escalation process:

- If City Clerk's Office staff person is uncertain about how to interpret or handle an issue raised by a service user, they should request the assistance of available management staff.
- Complaints may be accelerated through the escalation process depending on the nature of the issue and judgement of staff.
- Upon any escalation, staff inform the complainant of the manager's name and contact information.

First Stage – Informal Review

- Effort will be made to solve verbal complaints immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant without need for a formal written complaint.
- When receiving a verbal complaint directly, staff will listen and understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it.
- Frontline staff automatically and immediately refer the verbal complaint to the manager on duty when:
 - the complainant requests the complaint to be referred to a manager;
 - the verbal complaint is about conduct of a staff person, and/or significant disciplinary action is a possible outcome;

- the complainant is unusually upset, extremely angry or threatening;
 - the verbal complaint cannot be resolved by the frontline staff because it is outside their specific delegation or area of expertise; or
 - it is of a serious nature such as alleged controversial conduct, illegal conduct, or there is threat of legal action.
- All written complaints are referred to the appropriate manager.

Second Stage – Management Review

- All written complaints begin at the second stage.
- All complaints about conduct of frontline staff begin at the second stage.
- The manager acknowledges receipt with the complainant in accordance with defined standards. See timelines below.
- The manager reviews the complaint, and may attempt to resolve the complaint immediately.
- If required, the manager conducts a formal review of the complaint to determine its validity and explore a resolution (see Formal Review Process below).
- Management staff may request a verbal complainant to put the complaint in writing, especially if it involves a serious or complex matter. If the complainant declines to complete the form, the manager should record details as described by the complainant using the relevant forms.
- For all verbal and written complaints requiring formal review, the manager indicates to the complainant when they will contact them with a resolution or update. See timelines below.

Third Stage – Senior Management Review

- Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the manager, the manager refers the complaint to the director.
- The director may attempt to resolve the complaint immediately, or may conduct a formal review (see Formal Review Process below).
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision of the director, the director refers the matter to the City Clerk.
- If not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, at the City Clerk's discretion or at the complainant's request, it is referred to the City Manager.
- Where a complainant is dissatisfied at the end of the third stage, they are advised of the opportunity for external review by the Ombudsman.

7. Logging of the Complaint and Record

- A Complaint Registry is maintained to ensure a central record of the complaint and a database of complaints.
- Each folder is labelled with the complaint number beginning with the year.
- The Management Consultant (or designate) in Council & Support Services, is responsible for logging the complaint in the complaints registry and assigning a complaint number.

- The Management Consultant (or designate) scans and/or saves the complaint in a secure folder and ensures the complaint is forwarded to the manager of the relevant service area and advises the manager of the complaint number.
- If the written complaint is submitted directly to the service area, the manager in that area ensures copy is sent to the Management Consultant (or designate) in Council & Support Services, who logs the complaint in the complaints registry and scans and/or saves the complaint in a secure folder. A complaint number is assigned.
- All written complaints are logged using the complaint logging form which is an excel spreadsheet with basic information relating to the complaint and stored securely on the g-drive.
- Designated staff in Council and Support Services will have read/write access to the registry. The senior management team will have read access to the registry.

8. Monitoring and Reporting on Complaints

- Regular monitoring and review of complaints will be conducted to identify issues, trends, areas of concern and opportunities for improvement.
- Complaint issues are a standing agenda item for information and discussion at monthly senior management meetings. Based on monitoring and review of the complaints registry, a report is provided to the City Clerk's Office senior management team for information and action at least once per quarter.

9. Formal Review Process

- A formal review process may be conducted during the second and third stages. The formal review may include:
 - Discussion(s) with the complainant to clarify the complaint, confirm common understanding, clarify outcome sought, explain complaint procedures.
 - Discussion with staff involved (with union representative if applicable).
 - Review of background information such as policies and procedures, previous written communications and other documentation.
 - Obtain and review other expert opinions or perspectives.
- At each stage of escalation, it should be determined whether the formal review to-date has been adequate. Additional formal review may be made by the receiving manager.
- Once a formal review is begun, a formal review form is to be completed.
- At the conclusion of the formal review(s), a copy of the formal review form and any attachments sent in support of the complaint including any e-mail communications relating to the complaint, is sent to the Management Consultant(or designate) in Council & Support Services, who scans and/or saves the complaint in a secure folder in the complaints registry. The files

are labelled with the complaint number beginning with the year. The formal review information is linked to the complaint log spread sheet for ease of access.

10. Notice of Decision and Resolution

- Written complaints receive a written notice of decision unless otherwise requested by the complainant.
- Verbal complaints receive written or verbal notice at manager's discretion or as requested by the complainant.
- If formal review determines that the reasons for the complaint are not justified, and no further action is required, the complainant is notified.
- If formal review determines that the complaint is justified, the complainant is notified of corrective action to be taken and any remedy proposed.
- A copy of all written notifications to the complainant is sent to the Management Consultant (or designate) in Council & Support Services, who scans and/or saves the complaint in a secure folder in the complaints registry. The written notice information is linked to the complaint log spread sheet for ease of access.

11. Procedure and Standards for Responding to Complaints

- The City Clerk's Office applies certain standards for responding to complaints.
- Depending how the complainant requests to be contacted, the following standards for acknowledging complaint receipt at Second Stage apply:
 - Complaints are acknowledged by telephone within 1 working day of being received by the relevant service area.
 - Complaints are acknowledged by email within 1 working day of being received by the relevant service area.
 - Complaints are acknowledged by fax within 4 working days of being received by the relevant service area.
 - Complaints are acknowledged by mail within 4 working days of being received by the relevant service area.
- Where a formal review is required, complainants are contacted within 21 days with either a final response or update. At that time the complainant is advised of when the next contact will be – either for a proposed resolution or for the next progress update.
- Complainants are automatically contacted when their complaint is escalated.
- The manager may exercise discretion and contact the complainant more frequently or sooner than the above standards.
- **NOTE: From time to time, there may arise extraordinary circumstances where the City Clerk's Office may not be in a position to guarantee these standards can be satisfied (e.g. on or around the date of the municipal election, during labour disruption, etc.)**

12. List of Forms:

1. City Clerk's Office [Complaint Form](#)
2. City Clerk's Office [Representative Consent Form](#)