

POL	RESPONSE TO ENQUIRIES FROM THE STATE OMBUDSMAN	SC12
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POLICY CODE:	SC12
DIRECTORATE:	Executive Services
BUSINESS UNIT:	Executive Support
SERVICE UNIT:	Executive Support
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Director, Governance & Community Services
FILE NO.:	086/001
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DAPPS Meeting:	22 March 2012 28 November 2013
OCM:	17 September 2002 12 April 2012

BACKGROUND:

From time to time, Council receives enquiries from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (State Ombudsman) on behalf of individuals or organisations who have a dispute with a specific Council action or decision. It is essential that these enquiries are answered promptly and accurately. Any delays in this process may have a negative impact on Council's image and not assist in presenting the appropriate response.

PURPOSE:

This Policy provides the minimum standard of response to Ombudsman enquiries and the associated procedures are designed to ensure that records of all associated correspondence are readily available.

POLICY:

Any enquiry from the Ombudsman is to be treated as urgent correspondence requiring immediate attention. An acknowledgement of receipt is to be despatched on the same day that the enquiry is presented to the Chief Executive Officer for action (noting that these queries are addressed to the Mayor). Detailed and accurate responses to such enquiries are to be despatched within 10 working days and unless otherwise delegated, are to be accompanied by a covering letter signed by the Mayor.

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In order to avoid delays in this process, Council authorises the Chief Executive Officer to instigate responses to these enquiries. A copy of each enquiry from the State Ombudsman, the response and supporting documentation, is to be placed in the next "Elected Members Newsletter" publication, for information, except when, for the purposes of confidentiality or urgency, such documentation is forwarded to Elected Members under separate cover.

PROCEDURES

The following steps constitute the process of responding to Ombudsman enquiries:

1. On receipt by the Chief Executive Officer, all original copies of correspondence are to be placed on a central file in the Records Office. A letter of acknowledgement is to be immediately sent and a copy filed with the enquiry.
2. The Chief Executive Officer is to designate the Division responsible for providing a response and the relevant officer is to receive a copy of the correspondence in a clearly marked folder, with an instruction indicating the date on which a reply, including a covering letter, is to be available for the Chief Executive Officer to ratify and be presented for the Mayor's signature.
3. The reply, with copies of supporting documentary evidence if appropriate, is to be returned to the Chief Executive Officer by the due date.
4. After signing, the reply is to be despatched and a copy placed on the Central Records Office file along with the supporting documents.

A copy of each enquiry from the State Ombudsman, the response and supporting documentation, is to be placed in the next "Elected Members Newsletter" publication for information.

5. The Chief Executive Officer is to be advised of any factors which may delay these procedures.