

Aim: Ensure that we provide quality service and to provide clear and timely communication to improve the delivery of customer service.

Communications Policy

July 2017

This policy is owned by: Onchan District Commissioners
 Agreed by: Chief Executive
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Onchan District Commissioners
Communications

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Onchan District Commissioners and applies to all Board members and staff.

The primary focus is to promote clear and timely communications from the Authority; and develop a consistent standard for external communications in a bid to improve the delivery of customer service.

SCOPE

The aim of Onchan District Commissioners is to provide the highest standard of service to all their customers.

This policy outlines what is expected of staff when answering communications, in order to protect the reputation.

The aim of the policy is to build an understanding of what is appropriate and productive use of communication, to minimise miscommunication.

POLICY

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure communications are timely and relevant, easy to understand, and are clear and brief;
- Ensure that the customer is at the heart of all service improvements and to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and social impact
- Develop a consistent standard for external communications in a bid to improve the delivery of customer service.

The Authority is committed to and will provide a service to the public and does co-operate with other external agencies.

ONCHAN DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS REFERENCES

Onchan District Commissioners Customer Service Standards

DEFINITIONS

This policy relates to communications between members of the community, board members and staff.

The Commitment of Onchan District Commissioners is to

- Seek customer feedback and views at every opportunity
- Use this information to review our policies and procedures
- Use the information gathered to achieve and sustain service

ROLES

All

AUTHORITY TO VARY THE PROCEDURE

Chief Executive

PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

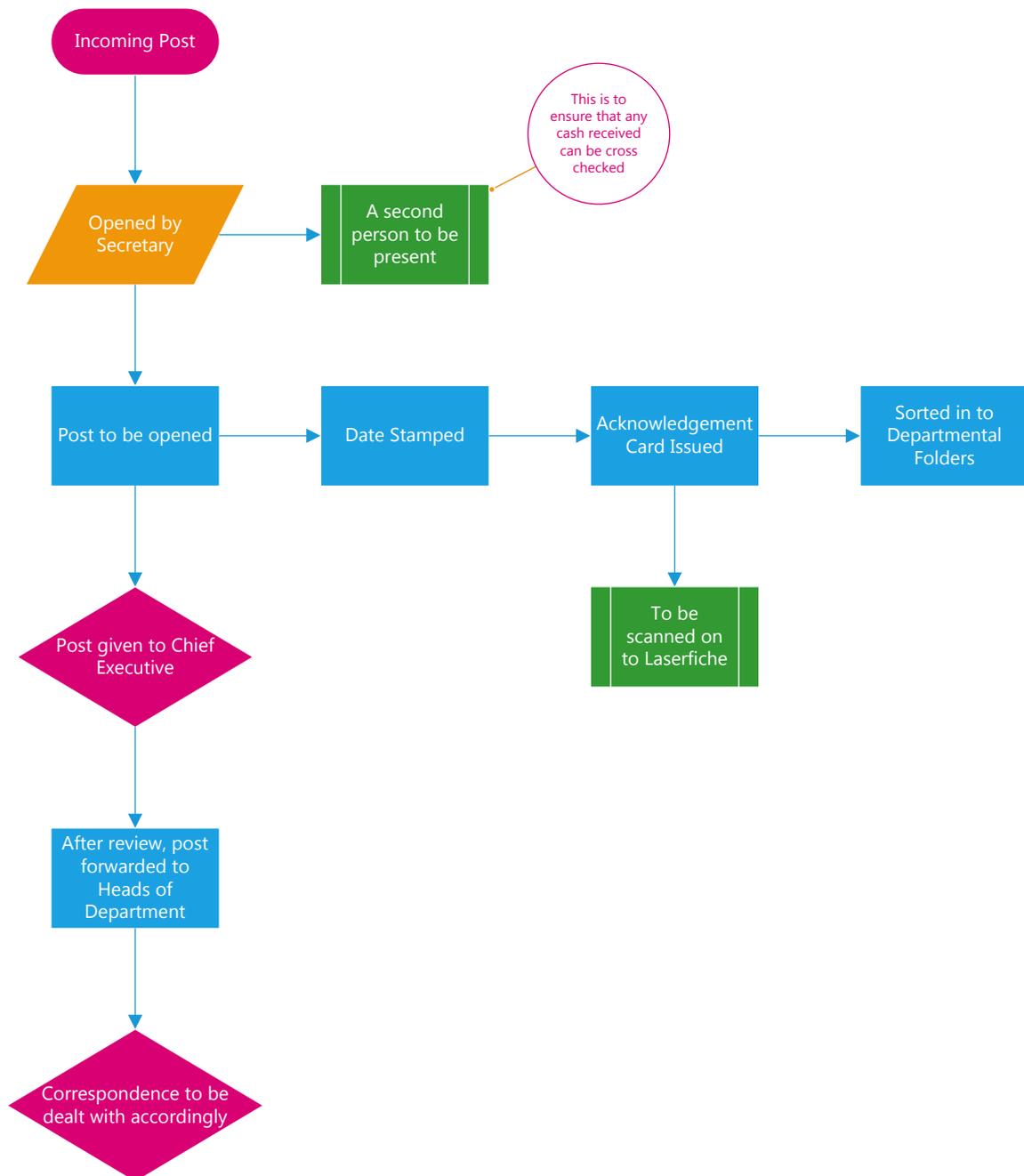
Communication plays an essential role in the conduct of the Authority's business. How staff communicate with people not only reflects on them as an individual but also on the Authority. The Authority values their ability to communicate with colleagues, residents, customers and business contacts, and invest substantially in information technology and communications systems which enable them to work more efficiently.

The Authority interacts with external stakeholders in various forms:-

- In person;
- By telephone;
- Written correspondence, both by letter and email;
- Website;
- Social Media channels.

3. Chief Executive

All communications to go through the office of the Chief Executive. (ODC 12/11/12)
(ExODC 26/03/07)



Any letters of a political or contentious nature, before issue, the reply must be first approved by the Chief Executive.

4. Press

When dealing with the press they are to be notified that the policy of the Authority with regard to public statements to be directed through the office of the Chief Executive.

5. Acknowledgement of Correspondence

After receipt of all correspondence, a substantive reply should be issued within 10 working days, if this cannot be achieved, then a holding response must be issued.

Communications are checked on a daily basis and acknowledgements issued on the same day. All correspondence goes through the office of the Chief Executive and then distributed to the different departments for reply and response.

6. Commissioners

It is expected that Commissioners will direct the majority of their communications to the Chief Executive/Clerk. This will ensure that normal management and supervisory arrangements are not undermined, and that requests of a sensitive or complex nature are not referred inappropriately.

It can, on occasion, be helpful to Commissioners and Officers alike for there to be direct communication between Commissioners and Officers at all levels. In any case, both the Commissioners and Officers concerned have a responsibility to ensure that the Chief Executive/Clerk or the appropriate senior manager is aware of what is being communicated.

7. Signatory

All correspondence/communications should be signed with the officers name, appropriate qualifications/letters and job title only.

8. Stakeholder Involvement and Consultation

The Onchan District Commissioners have a responsibility to ensure that their stakeholders receive a clear and timely pro-active communications which are:-

- **Targeted** - We aim to target tailored communications appropriate to the needs of each different audience group, in terms of verbal and visual style, content, delivery and media used; while ensuring consistency of message across all media types.
- **Clear and Accessible** - Our communications must be clear in order to be effective. We aim to explain technical matters using plain English, and avoiding jargon wherever possible, in order to avoid potential confusion and misunderstanding.
- **Accurate and Timely** - We aim to deliver communications to our audiences that are factual and precise in a timely fashion, so that they are received when they are relevant.
- **Equality of access** - We aim to ensure that our communications address the needs of diverse audiences, in order to reach as many people as possible using a variety of different media appropriate to the needs of each audience group.
- **Feedback to us** - We aim to provide all with an effective channel to give us feedback on our communications to them. This includes questionnaires, and monitoring any compliments and complaints that we may receive, this will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of our communications, and also develop our communications going forward.

9. Telephone

See Appendix 1 Service Standards.

10. Email

See Appendix 1 Service Standards.

Any emails from Members which are to be circulated in the public domain must have their personal/work email addresses removed.

Use the email template which contains the appropriate disclaimer notice and this is not to be amended in any way.

Please read the Commissioners' internet and email policy.

11. Written Correspondence

See Appendix 1 Service Standards.

Issuing correspondence from the Authority should comprise an appropriate tone that is polite, positive, plain English so that it could not easily be misinterpreted.

Personal opinions in correspondence should not be included.

12. Reception Visits

See Appendix 1 Service Standards.

13. Face-to-Face

See Appendix 1 Service Standards.

14. Contact

- Be polite and respectful
- Be positive and efficient
- Listen and take their views, wishes and needs seriously
- Make sure that the staff are trained to give the help and advice that is required
- Use plain language and not use jargon
- All parts of the enquiry to be addressed
- Any agreed action points to be completed within a reasonable timescale or any such defined date/time.
- Provide information in other formats – e.g. large print – where needed
- Do not discriminate

15. Comment, Compliment or Complaint

To continuously review and improve services provided and to update working practices and policies, feedback should be welcomed.

(a) **Complaints**

Treat complaints confidentially, while making sure that fairness is demonstrated to all involved.

In processing the complaint, it will need to include the following details:-

- Date of receipt
- Name and contact details
- Nature of complaint (brief description)
- Category of complaint (i.e. housing, waste, etc)
- Issue an acknowledgement
- Inform the Chief Executive who will forward the complaint to the Head of Department to investigate;
- Follow the complaints procedure detailed in *Appendix 1*.

Apologise when the Authority are at fault and do their best to put things right

If not satisfied with the response, inform how a complainant can take their matter further.

(b) **Compliments**

In processing the compliment, it will need to include the following details:-

- Date of receipt
- Name and contact details
- Nature of compliment (brief description)
- Category of compliment (i.e. housing, waste, etc)
- Inform the Chief Executive
- Where necessary, issue a letter of thanks.
- Chief Executive to forward compliments on to the relevant section/personnel.

16. **Response Times**

Standard Information Request within 3 Days

All other requests: within 10 Days

If a response cannot be fulfilled within 10 working days, a holding response will be issued detailing:-

- Date of receipt for the original correspondence;
- Member of staff dealing with the enquiry;
- Expected response date;
- Any other relevant details, e.g. correspondence being referred to the Board of Commissioners.

A full response must be sent by the date given in the holding response, or in the event of such a response not being available; a new expected response date and explanation for the delay.

17. **Confidentiality**

All information relating to the customers and our business operations is confidential. You must treat our paper-based and electronic information with utmost care.

18. **Risk Management**

To ensure that the employees have a right to work in a safe environment free from aggressive or threatening behaviour.

Introduction of a mechanism to ensure that communications are effective and regularly monitored.

All staff and Board Members be made aware of this policy during orientation and are provided with on-going support to assist them to effectively use the internal communication systems.

Particular care must be taken when using email and social media as a means of communication because all expressions of fact, intention and opinion may bind you and/or Onchan District Commissioners and can be produced in court in the same way as other kinds of written statements.

19. **Record Keeping**

All documents bearing Onchan District Commissioners name and/or logo, including digital and electronic materials, must be saved in the electronic and hard copy filing systems. This allows for others to be able to follow the audit trail of the communication.

20. Monitoring and Review of Communications

The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for all business communications but subject to that will, so far as possible and appropriate, respect your privacy and autonomy while working. The Chief Executive may monitor your business communications for reasons which include:

- providing evidence of business transactions;
- ensuring that business procedures, policies and contracts with staff are adhered to;
- complying with any legal obligations;
- monitoring standards of service, staff performance, and for staff training;
- preventing or detecting unauthorised use of communications systems or criminal activities; and

The policy will be reviewed every two years or as required following any major changes in legislation.

21. Compliance with this Policy

Failure to comply with any policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against you under Onchan District Commissioners' disciplinary procedures.

Please note that the procedures and policies outlined in this policy, and in any related policy, may be reviewed or changed at any time.

22. Data Protection

Data protection is about the privacy of individuals, and is governed by the Data Protection Act 2002.

Members of Onchan District Commissioners who use the communications facilities, you will inevitably be involved in processing personal data for the Authority as part of your job.

References

http://www.sectorconnect.org.au/assets/pdf/resources/mgrnwk/Communications_Policy.pdf

www.out-law.com/.../communications_policy3_november_2007.

http://www.ibe.org.uk/userfiles/briefing_3.pdf

APPENDIX 1
CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS
(approved June 2017)

When you contact us we will:

- Respond as soon as possible;
- Be polite and respectful;
- Identify ourselves;
- Aim to have your request resolved by the first person you contact as soon as possible;
- Attempt to provide you with a written response within five working days if we can't provide an answer there and then;
- Tell you if a response is going to take longer than 5 working days, and keep you up to date with progress;
- Tell you how to make a complaint about our services, if you are not satisfied, and provide a detailed written response within 20 working days.

When you visit, we will:

- Greet you at a reception point on time if you have made an appointment;
- If you do not have an appointment, we will see you within 15 minutes or contact an appropriate person on your behalf to deal with your enquiry;
- Ensure that our waiting areas are accessible, clean, comfortable, tidy and safe;
- Provide access to private interview rooms.

When we visit you we will:

- Contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time;
- Be on time;
- If you are out when we visit, leave our contact details letting you know who called, and how to contact us to rearrange the visit.

When you write to us, phone or email we will:

- Make sure our responses are clear, accurate, easy to understand and without jargon;
- Provide a means of leaving a message if the person you need to speak to is not available so they can get back to you as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 2
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
(approved 2007 updated October 2015)

First Stage

Phone, write or call at the Commissioners Office. We will try to sort out your query or problem straight away and give you a full written answer within 20 working days.

Second Stage

If you are not happy with our answer in the First Stage, then write to the Deputy Clerk to the Commissioners or Telephone: 675564. Again we will try to sort out your problems straight away and give you a written reply within 10 working days.

Third Stage

To have your problem dealt with at this stage, you must contact the Chief Executive of the Onchan District Commissioners in writing within 10 working days of receiving your reply from the second stage. He will look into the matter on your behalf and if necessary refer it to the relevant Standing Committee or to a meeting of the full Board of Commissioners.

Your Local Commissioner

Your local Commissioner can also look into your complaints. He or she will deal with the officers involved to help solve your problem.

The Commissioners hold regular “surgeries” for you to go and discuss your problems. You will find details of times and places for these surgeries in the reception area of the Onchan District Commissioners and at the Onchan Library. You can also phone or write to your local Commissioner to arrange an appointment to see him or her.

Department of Infrastructure

If you think we have not followed our policies fairly, you can take your case to the Department of Infrastructure. The Department is impartial, and has the power to investigate (for example, if we have not kept to our rules or dealt with your complaint in a reasonable time).