

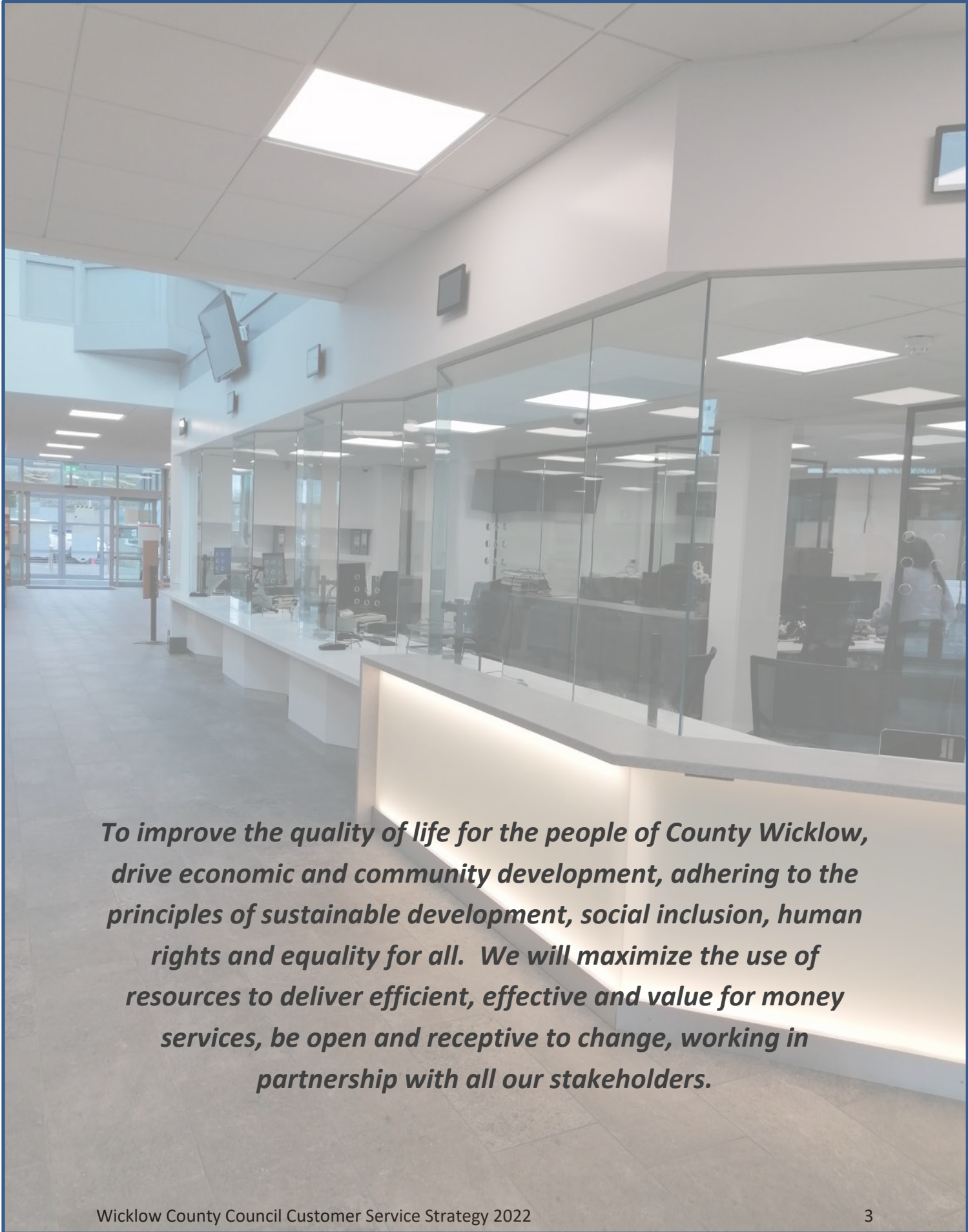
Wicklow County Council Customer Service Strategy 2022



Introduction

Wicklow County Council Customer Service Strategy outlines our commitment to providing excellence in Customer Service in a professional, timely and inclusive manner. Our Key guiding principles have a common citizen centric approach to service delivery. Our Strategy outlines the range of services provided by the Council and new initiatives to improve the quality of our service for the future.

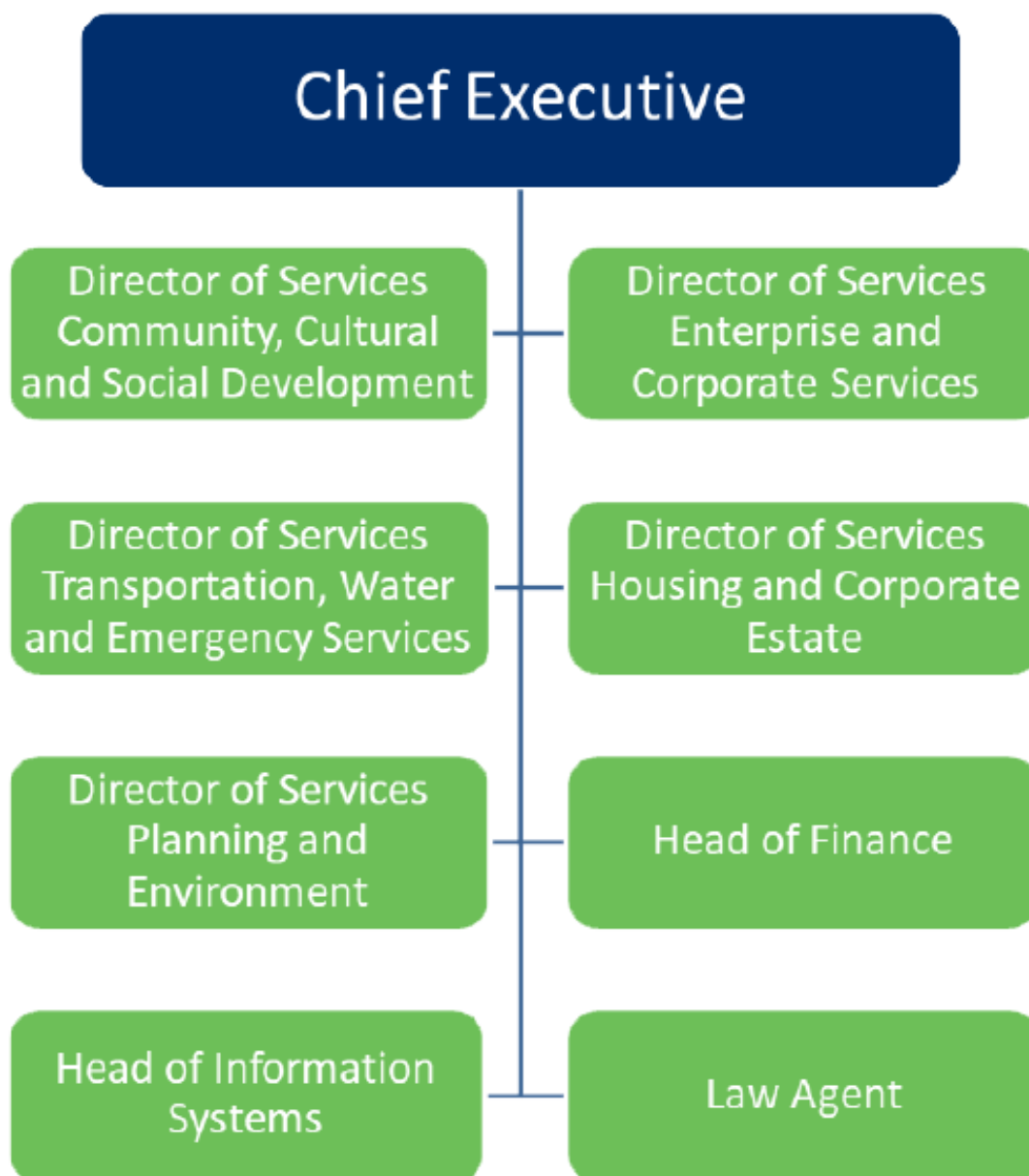




To improve the quality of life for the people of County Wicklow, drive economic and community development, adhering to the principles of sustainable development, social inclusion, human rights and equality for all. We will maximize the use of resources to deliver efficient, effective and value for money services, be open and receptive to change, working in partnership with all our stakeholders.

About the Organisation

The day to day operational decisions are carried out by the Chief Executive having regard to the policy direction of the Elected Members. The Chief Executive is supported in his role by the Senior Management team, to whom executive functions are delegated, including management functions of the municipal districts.



About the Organisation

Wicklow County Council is one of 31 Local Authorities in Ireland, employing circa 850 people across wide functional areas delivering a comprehensive range of services, with 32 elected members serving five Municipal Districts; Arklow, Bray, Baltinglass, Greystones and Wicklow. We provide a wide range of facilities and services to the citizens of Wicklow in order to improve and enhance the quality of life for those living, working, doing business and visiting our County. Wicklow County Council has responsibility for the provision of a broad range of social, infrastructural, regulatory and promotional services to the public, our visitors and business.

We provide essential services to the public, visitors and business including:

- Housing and related services
- Planning Development, Building Control and Enforcement
- Environment, Recycling Centres and Climate Action
- Roads, Traffic Management and Public Lighting
- Motor Tax, Revenue and Finance
- Community, Cultural and Social Development
- Playgrounds, Parks and Recreational Spaces
- Tourism, Beaches and Harbours
- Burial Grounds, Register of Electors



About the Organisation

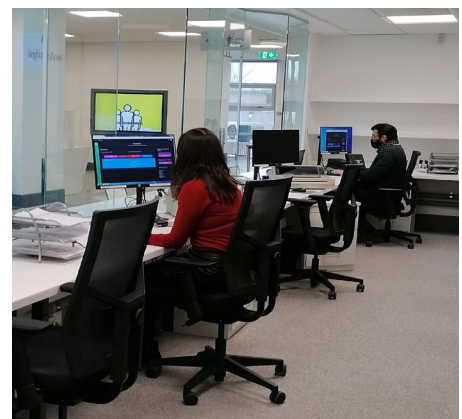
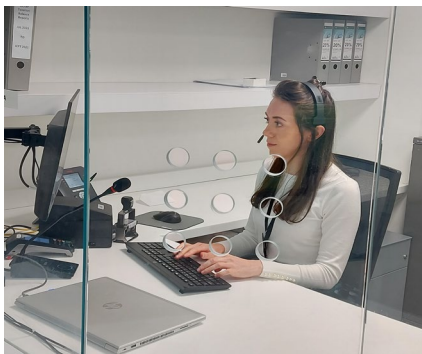


- Local Enterprise Office
- Libraries, Archives, Arts and Heritage
- Fire, Water and Emergency Services
- Arklow Municipal District Office
- Baltinglass Municipal District Office
- Bray Municipal District Office
- Greystones Municipal District Office
- Wicklow Municipal District Office

A complete list of services is available on our website at www.wicklow.ie and also on the Local Government Service Catalogue website at <https://services.localgov.ie/en-ie/Service-Catalogue/Authority/WicklowCountyCouncil>

Our Customers

Our Customers are any member of the public, our elected representatives and all our citizens that avail of our services indirectly or directly and who Live, conduct Business or Visit County Wicklow.



Principles of Quality Customer Service

1. Quality Service Standards



Publish a Customer Charter that outlines the nature and quality of service which our customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery. Our Customer Charter is available on our website www.wicklow.ie/Living/Your-Council/Customer-Care/Customer-Staff-Charters

Wicklow County Council will strive to provide excellent Customer Service delivery by:

Telephone Service:

- We will be polite and courteous and provide you with clear and accurate information.
- We will answer phone calls in a professional and timely manner.
- As far as possible, we will deal with your query at your first point of contact.
- If you need further assistance we will direct your call to the most appropriate person.
- If we cannot respond to your query immediately, we will take your details and phone you back at a time that is convenient for you.

Visiting our Offices:

- We will be polite and courteous and deal with your query in an efficient manner.
- We will ensure our Customer Service areas are adequately staffed to deal with your query in a timely manner.
- We will respect your privacy and deal with your query in a confidential manner.
- We will provide you with clear and concise information where possible.
- As far as possible, we will deal with your query at your first point of contact.
- If you need further assistance we will direct your call to the most appropriate person.
- We will provide a safe, clean and accessible public space.

Written and Electronic Correspondence (email and post)

- We will acknowledge correspondence within 5 working days and will endeavour to reply within 20 working days or less, excluding situations where statutory procedures apply.
- We will reply in clear and plain language and will only use technical terms and acronyms if necessary.
- We will give a contact name, telephone number, email address and reference number, where appropriate, in all written correspondence
- We will advise you of the information you require, where possible, or advise of an alternative source for your information.

2. Equality and Diversity



Public Sector Equality and Human Rights duty – to ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, prevent discrimination, accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community) and to protect the human rights of our employees, customers and all citizens.

Wicklow County Council will promote diversity and continue to improve our services to ensure they are accessible to our citizens experiencing poverty and social exclusion and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

- Deliver equality awareness training to our staff.
- Promote our Age Friendly Strategy on public access points and on our website.
- Provide hearing loop system in our Civic space to assist citizens who are hard of hearing.
- Provide assistive technologies on our website to aid citizens browse and access content and services.
- Provide sign language facility in our county building to assist with appointments.
- A-D Caller Initiative (Able Disable Caller), to assist Customers/Tenants with a disability to access services easily with understanding and patience.

3. Physical Access



Provide a safe, clean and accessible public offices that ensures privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

- Provide easy accessible public counters for all citizens.
- Apply the recommendations from NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) plain English training in all our communication channels.

4. Information



Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

- Provide accurate and timely information on all our services.
- Provide relevant and up to date information on our website.
- Provide useful updates and alerts to our citizens on social media.
- To promote the use of NALA plain English guidelines by our staff, when providing information to all our stakeholders.

5. Timeliness and Courtesy



Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

- To acknowledge and respond to Customer queries in a professional and timely manner.
- To provide relevant contact details in all interactions to ensure ease of transactions.
- To provide ongoing training to our staff dealing directly with our Customers.

6. Complaints



Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

- Provide a clear and up to date Customer Complaints Policy to inform our customers of their rights (outlined in Appendix 2)
- Deal with all complaints in a sensitive manner within the timeframe set out in our Complaints Policy.

7. Appeals



Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

8. Consultation and Evaluation



Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

- Promote the use of our online Consultation hub to all citizens.
- Provide an online digital Customer comments and feedback form on our website.

9. Choice



Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

Explore the feasibility of providing online payment for self-service transactions for the convenience of our Customers.

10. Official Languages Equality



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

11. Better Coordination



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

- Provide a centralised Customer Service hub for customers to access a range of services and information.
- Develop an online catalogue of the services we provide to our citizens and the community.

12. Internal Customer



We will support and provide relevant training to our staff to assist them in carrying out their duties. We recognise our staff as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues. We will provide support and training to our Elected members to assist them with their important role in our community.

- Engage with our staff regarding our service delivery to identify issues and improve and update our process.
- Manage and respond to Elected Members representational requests in a professional and timely manner.
- Improve and enhance communication channels with our Elected Members to inform them of changes to services and relevant updates.

Appendix 1:

Code of Conduct for Customers and Members of the Public

Wicklow County Council aims to provide a high quality service, in a safe and secure environment. In order to achieve this, our Code of Conduct has been established for all those who use the facilities and have dealings with Wicklow County Council including customers, elected members and members of the public.

We would ask our customers to note that the following behaviour will not be accepted in any of our facilities

1. Behaviour which is disruptive and interferes with the use of the facility by others.
2. Harassment of council staff or members of the public by use of abusive, racist, obscene or threatening language.
3. Use of violence or threat of violence toward employees and/or members of the public.
4. The posting of unacceptable comments or offensive material on any social media platform or Internet site about employees of the Council which refer or relate to their role with Council.
5. Malicious damage to and/or theft of Wicklow County Council property.
6. The use of alcohol and illicit drugs while using Wicklow County Council facilities.
7. Smoking in public areas within Wicklow County Council premises.
8. Personal property being left unattended while using Wicklow County Council facilities.
9. Help us to help you - as our customer, you also have an important role to play in helping us offer you the best service. By doing the following, you can greatly assist us to provide the optimum service to you:
 - provide accurate information and copies of all relevant documents if needed quote appropriate reference numbers in all correspondence, where available.
 - provide contact details, including a daytime telephone number or email address;
 - cooperate with Wicklow County Council Staff and treat them with the same courtesy you would expect to receive. It is not acceptable in any circumstances

to harass officials or use aggressive, abusive, racist or threatening language in written or other forms. **Any behaviour that is disruptive to the delivery of quality customer service may result in the permanent termination of contact.**

Please help us to encourage the responsible and considerate use of Wicklow County Council facilities by observing the Code of Conduct.

Appendix 2:

Customer Complaints Procedure

We aim to provide an efficient, effective service in a courteous manner to all our Customers. Every effort is made by our staff to ensure that services are delivered to the highest possible standard in a professional and courteous manner. There may be occasions when you feel that we have not achieved this aim and you may not be satisfied with the quality of service provided.

Wicklow County Council's complaints policy strives to deliver a positive outcome and a swift resolution to your complaint.

What is a Complaint?

There is a difference between making a complaint and reporting a fault or repair issue. If you are reporting a fault or repair issue, we endeavour to resolve it quickly and it will not be dealt with through the Complaints procedure.

A complaint is when you tell us you are not happy about the quality of a service we provide, such as:

- When we do not deliver a satisfactory service
- When you receive a poor quality or below standard service
- When you are unhappy with the quality of service provided by a member of staff.

You can make a formal complaint in writing the following ways:

- Online using the online customer comments/feedback form on our website <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Your-Council/Customer-Care/Make-an-Enquiry-or-Complaint>
- By letter, official complaint form, or email to:

Customer Services Manager
Wicklow County Council
County Buildings
Wicklow Town
Co. Wicklow
Tel: 0404-20100
e-mail: customerservice@wicklowcoco.ie

We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days. Your complaint will then be referred to the Senior Executive officer in the relevant Department/Section, who will investigate it and respond to you within 20 working days. The responses will be issued in accordance with the guidelines under NALA Plain English. Plain English is a way of writing and presenting information that helps someone understand it the first time they read or hear it.

If you are not satisfied with the response, you may appeal the decision to the Senior Executive Officer, Enterprise & Corporate Services, within 10 working days of receiving the response. The Senior Executive Officer will examine the complaint and the response you received and make a decision on the appeal within 20 working days.

The areas excluded from our complaints policy are:

- All formal appeals relating to decisions on planning applications.
- All appeals against decisions under Freedom of Information legislation.
- All requests for Access to Information on the Environment
- Complaints in relation breach of Ethics legislation or code of conduct in relation to Elected Members and/or Employees of Wicklow County Council should be forward directly to the Ethics Officer, Wicklow County Council.

Wicklow County Council as a statutory body is obliged to comply with the principles of natural justice and also the Data Privacy laws under GDPR therefore complaints regarding individuals within or outside the organisation must be carefully presented so as not to breach a person's right to their good name, right to reply or their right to privacy regarding the circulation of data that could amount to a breach of those principles. WCC reserves the right to refuse to accept written complaints of this nature but will advise the complainant of the issues that need to be addressed for a complaint to be received.

If you remain unhappy with our response to your complaint then you can refer it to the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is fair, independent, and free to use. The Ombudsman will ask you for details of your complaint and a copy of our final response to your complaint.

The best way to contact the Ombudsman is by:

- Clicking on the 'Make A Complaint' link at www.ombudsman.ie

You can also:

- Write to the Ombudsman at: 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773
- Call the Ombudsman on 01 639 5600 if you have any queries.



Wicklow County Council – Formal Complaint Form

We aim to provide an efficient, effective service in a courteous manner to all our Customers. If you are not satisfied with the quality of service you receive, you can let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the quality of service you received, please return this form to:

- *Customer Service Manager, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow A67 FW96*
or
- *E-mail to customerservice@wicklowcoco.ie*

Your complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the complaints and appeals procedure adopted by Wicklow County Council.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Please specify which department or service you complaint relates to:

Please provide details of your Complaint:
