

**Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall**
Fingal County
Council



FINGAL CITIZEN CHARTER

Comhairle Chontae Fhine Gall

Fingal County Council

INTRODUCTION

Fingal 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 the Citizen. There is much that you can do to help. A lot of Council funds are taken up solving problems that could be prevented by good citizenship. Look at how much we spend on cleaning up litter every year? Just imagine if citizens made a decision not to throw litter on our streets? If there was no litter, we could use this money on really necessary things like increased funding of the Disabled Persons Grant Schemes, buying more Library Books and developing much needed Community and Recreational facilities.

We have drawn up this Citizens Charter so that you, the Citizen, are clear on the quality of service you can expect from us in Fingal County Council as stated in our Corporate Plan. We also want to make clear how you, as a Citizen, can exercise your responsibility in improving quality of life in Fingal.

THIS IS WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

In Fingal County Council we want to provide all our citizens with quality service. We know that our citizens may be different on the basis of age, gender, religion, race, membership of the Traveller community, disability, sexual orientation, marital status and family status. We will make sure that we uphold equality legislation (such as the Equal Status Act, as amended, 2004) and work to remove any barriers that prevent groups or individuals from

accessing our services. Staff training will be carried out so that we can better understand and respond to these different needs.

Physical Access

We will keep our offices clean, accessible, disability friendly and will incorporate “Building for Everyone, National Disability Authority Booklet Guidelines” as much as possible. We will respect your right to privacy and will facilitate this to the best of our ability.

Information

We will provide information that is clear and accurate and we will deliver it to you on time. We will continue to develop our Website. We will provide information in a “user friendly” way making our application forms as easy to read, as understandable as possible and have sources of information available in Braille and Audio.

Timeliness and Courtesy

We will treat all our citizens with the utmost courtesy and respond with minimum delay. Our staff would also like that they receive the same courtesy from you the citizen during the course of your business with us. We will give contact names in all communications. We will acknowledge all letters in need of a reply within three working days of receipt. We will issue full replies within 15 working days. If more time is required we will explain the reasons for the delay in writing. (For example, there may be certain occasions where time limits are set by statute and are outside our control i.e. Planning Applications, Freedom of Information etc.) We will answer your phone calls within 20 seconds of the first ring and you will be told both the names of the department and the person answering. We will report on our compliance with these targets in our Annual Report.

Reception Facilities

We will deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible. If you have to wait, we will explain the reason why. We will make sure that our reception areas are well sign posted, clean, tidy and comfortable. We respect your right to confidentiality and will try to provide private interview facilities if you request them. You will find a range of information leaflets at our

reception desks. We will also use these areas where possible for the display of statutory information. We will ensure wheelchair and blind accessibility as much as possible.

Complaints

We operate a transparent and user-friendly complaints procedure ensuring efficient co-ordination with statutory bodies (i.e. The Ombudsman, Information Commissioner, etc.)

Choice

We provide a wide range of options in relation to payment methods and opening hours.

Official Languages

We will facilitate bi-lingualism (English/Irish) to the maximum possible extent and recognise other languages as appropriate.

Consultation

Because you the citizen, can help us to do business better you will find “Service Comment/Complaint Forms” at all our public contact points. In addition, we will carry out regular Citizen Surveys in relation to a wide range of our services.

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 in your wheelie bin.
- Adopt the public footpath and grass margin in front of your home or business premises, as it is your responsibility. 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 builders rubble, old fridges, white goods and furniture. For a small fee, you can safely get rid of unwanted appliances at our Civic Recycling centres. If you have an old car to scrap, just give us a call and for a charge we will take it away and dispose of it properly.

Recycling:

- Reduce, reuse, recycle – Use your green bins and/or our Civic Recycle Centres.

Wheelie Bins:

- Do not leave your emptied wheelie bin on the footpath on a permanent basis. Return it to your own property.

Water Supply:

- Stop wasting water. Use water sparingly in your home or business and fix leaks promptly.

Rivers & 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 and other 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 to pick it up and bring it home for safe disposal. We supply free scoopers at our public offices.

Parks & 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 others using our public and open spaces.

Trees & 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, such as your own residential area, near schools, play areas, churches or shopping centres.

Drink Driving:

- Respect life, do not drink and drive.

Car Parking:

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

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:

- Be truthful about your family and housing circumstances when applying for social housing.
- Tell us about any changes that happen in your family of housing circumstances.
- Pay your rent on time and 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.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH OUR SERVICE TO YOU

Complaints Procedure

We aim to get things right first time. However, nobody gets it right 100% of the time. If you feel aggrieved in any way about the quality of service provided by us to you or are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to service, we want you to feel comfortable about challenging what has happened. If we cannot resolve things quickly and to your satisfaction, then you are free to make a formal complaint.

We have clear guidelines for dealing with complaints:

- You have a right to complain about our services and seek a resolution
- We will investigate all complaints in a fair and impartial way
- We will treat your complaint confidentially as far as possible 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.

Guiding Principles of the Complaints Procedures

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

Complaint Handling – Step by Step

There is a difference between making a formal complaint and reporting a fault. For example ringing the Operations Department to report a pothole is reporting a fault. It only becomes a complaint if whatever remedial action promised does not materialise.

Therefore, our definition of “complaint” is when your dissatisfaction has not been addressed. This dissatisfaction can apply to the way we deliver services or to services not delivered to you to which you believe you are entitled.

How to make a formal complaint

If you have reported a fault or problem to a particular Department and you are unhappy with the response, you should contact the Complaints Co-ordinator, Corporate Affairs and Governance Department, Fingal County Council, County Hall, Swords, Fingal, Co. Dublin. A Service Comment/Complaint form is available at public offices and on the Fingal County Council website.

The Co-ordinator will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days explaining the next steps to be taken and giving the name of the staff member and the relevant Department of the Council directly responsible for investigating the problem. This staff member will study all documentation and files and you will normally be notified of a decision in relation to your complaint within 15 working days. If it is not possible to make a decision within 15 working days, you will be told the expected date for the final decision.

The decision letter will also include details of the appeal process available to you if you are unhappy with the final decision. We will also tell you if any changes have been made in our practices and procedures as a result of your complaint.

Right of Appeal

You can appeal our response to your complaint for the following reasons:

1. If you do not get a response within the specified time frame (15 working days) or
2. If you are unhappy with the decision that has been made.

Appeals should be sent in writing to:

Senior Executive Officer,
Corporate Affairs and
Governance Department
Fingal County Council
County Hall
Swords
Fingal
County Dublin
Tel: 01 8905164

Email: complaintsofficer@fingal.ie

You should try to make your appeal within 4 weeks of a decision that has been made or within 4 weeks of the expiry date (where you haven't received notification of a decision). An Appeals Officer will investigate all appeals. You will receive a formal, written, response explaining the outcome and any action taken. An Appeals Officer has full responsibility for judging appeals. They have the authority to change or nullify the previous decision. They will complete their review within 15 working days of receipt of your appeal and notify you in

writing. This letter will explain the reasons for the decision of an Appeals Officer and will give you further details of how to appeal to the Ombudsman if you are still unhappy.

Redress

Citizens are entitled to be treated properly, fairly, impartially and promptly by Fingal County Council. If these standards are not maintained and it is our fault you are entitled to expect us to make amends.