

**Home Ownership
Customer Service Standards**

Home Ownership - What you can expect from us

01279 446655
www.harlow.gov.uk
contact@harlow.gov.uk



Customer Service Standards – Home Ownership

One of Harlow Council's priorities is to provide high performing, customer focused services. To help us to do this, we have developed a set of customer service standards which show the level of service you can expect from us.

Our Corporate Service Standards are:

All Staff will:

- Treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times
- Find out about customers needs and meet them where possible
- Help customers who need extra support to explain their needs
- Help customers access relevant services in another part of the Council or partner organisation
- Give customers information about services including what they can expect and when
- Listen to customers' comments, suggestions and views

Staff presentation and conduct

- Staff will carry a corporate identity badge at all times when meeting customers
- Staff will dress appropriately for work

Correspondence

- All letters will be clear and easy to understand
- Letters will be replied to within 10 working days. If this is not possible an acknowledgement will be sent within two working days, providing a timescale for a full reply. We will send a further letter and explanation if this timescale subsequently slips
- All emails will be short, clear and easy to read
- We will give you alternative contact details in response to emails when the recipient will be out of the office for more than one working day

- Emails will be replied to within 10 working days. If this is not possible an acknowledgement will be sent within two working days, providing a timescale for a full reply. We will send a further letter and explanation if this timescale subsequently slips
- Faxes will be responded to in the same way as letters and emails

Telephone

- We will answer all telephones within 10 seconds of ringing
- We will keep voice mail messages up to date and we will give you an alternative number if the recipient is away for more than one working day
- Messages will be responded to within one working day

Reception areas

- All of our reception areas will have easy access for all customers
- Waiting times will be no longer than 10 minutes

In addition to our Corporate Service Standards, each service has its own standards which are outlined below:

Home Ownership

We will:

- Offer to help fill in any of our related forms and process them within 28 days
- Keep you informed of any changes to the services that will affect you
- Give you information and advice on leasehold and home ownership matters
- Provide information and advice on a range of housing matters
- Give information to you within the Harlow Home section of Harlow Times
- Hold a leasehold forum twice a year

- Continue to work with you to improve the service by monitoring your comments, compliments and complaints
- Keep pre-arranged appointments and make every effort to forewarn you if for some reason it is not possible to do so

Making an application to ‘right to buy’

- Within four weeks of receiving your right to buy application form we will send you a notice telling you the outcome. If we deny your application we will tell you why your claim is being denied
- If your application is accepted we will arrange for your property to be valued, and when we receive the value of your property we will send you a notice, within eight weeks of admitting your claim for a house and within 12 weeks of admitting your claim for a flat/maisonette. This notice will tell you the price of your property and terms and conditions of the sale
- If your property is leasehold (flat/maisonette) we will supply information on Service Charges and Major Works
- We will issue you with a default notice if no acceptance/denial form is received in the specific time limit allowing you further time to decide
- We will on your written request cancel your right to buy claim
- On receiving your acceptance of the offer we will pass all your paperwork to our Legal Section to arrange the conveyance
- We will deal with any queries you may have concerning Right to Buy

Undertaking major works

- We will agree with you and publish a ‘Major Works Procedure’ (Compact) working to agreed standards of information, workmanship and code of conduct
- We will arrange a meeting to discuss major works that need to be carried out to your block if five or more people request it

- We will aim to give you choices on some of the works if this is possible
- We will keep you informed about the work to your block
- We will ask for your comments on the standard of the work
- We will give you a breakdown of the specified work when the tender has been awarded
- We will give you a breakdown of the final account with your bill
- We will offer you a loan for major works that are over £500
- We will give you a five year programme of works which will be updated yearly

Collecting Service Charges

- We will give you a breakdown showing the services that have been charged to you with your estimated bill for the year and your statement of actual expenditure at the end of the year
- We will offer a wide range of payment methods
- We will give you a six monthly statement of your account

Contacting Us

If you are unhappy with any service you have received from Harlow Council, please speak to a member of staff who will help you with your complaint or see our complaints leaflet. We take complaints seriously as they help us improve our services.

The Council expects its employees to treat members of the public with respect and expects the same from members of the public in their dealings with staff even if you think we have done something wrong.

Our service standards are reviewed regularly so please let us have any comments you would like to make on these standards.

Contact Details

Contact Harlow
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The Water Gardens
Harlow, Essex
CM20 1WG

01279 446655

contact@harlow.gov.uk

www.harlow.gov.uk

Our opening hours are:

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm
and Saturdays 9am to 12pm

Copies of this leaflet can be made available in the following ways:

- In another language
- By email
- On disc
- In large print
- On our website