

Policy for Corporate Complaints

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Document Control

Title	Policy for Corporate Complaints
Document Type	New
Author	Danielle Bridge Complaints and Information Manager
Owner	Head of Customer Contact
Subject	Corporate Complaints
Government Security Classification	Official
Created	March 2023
Approved by	
Date Approved	
Review Date	

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Description of Change
1	09/03/23	Danielle Bridge, Complaints, and Information Manager	New Policy Draft

1. Introduction

The council aim to provide exceptional services to our customers and deliver those services right on the first time. It is not always possible to deliver the services without on occasion things going wrong due to this we recognise and understand the importance of feedback.

The Council aim to respond to complaints promptly and efficiently, resolving complaints quickly whenever it is possible. We will then use your comments to drive service improvements.

For the purpose of this document, the term complainant refers to any person making a complaint, for example, a resident or a service user.

2. What is a complaint

The Council, takes complaints seriously and has adopted the following definition from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

“A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of the Council (whether that is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) either verbal or in writing, and whether justified or not, which requires a response”

Any person receiving a service from the Council can make a complaint if they feel that there has been a failure in the service they have received.

3. Complaint Stages

Stage 1 Complaint

Complainants can use our online form to complete a complaint about a council service. We will respond to your complaint within 10 working days.

If you are submitting a complaint on behalf of another person you will need to provide signed written consent from the person you are representing before we can take your complaint.

Review

Once you have received your answer, at stage 1, if you are still not satisfied, you may ask for a review.

You must ask for a review no later than 28 days from our initial stage 1 reply.

Within five days we will send you an acknowledgement and the date by which you should receive a formal reply, which should be within 30 working days. If we cannot meet this target you will be sent a progress report.

There are some circumstances in which the Council will decide it not appropriate to review the complaint further and in these circumstances, you will receive a response providing you reasons as to why this is the case.

Ombudsman

If you are still not satisfied with the response which has been provided you can approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman Service.

4. How to make a complaint

We encourage our residents to use our online forms to submit their complaint which will allow for evidence to be uploaded to support your case. The form can be found at the following link

[Submit a Complaint](#)

5. Complaints that cannot be considered under this policy

- requests for a service (e.g. reporting a faulty street light)
- complaints relating to established council policy or the council's implementation of government policy
- matters for which there is a right of appeal (either within the council or via an employment tribunal), or a legal remedy (e.g. a penalty charge notice, parking ticket, school admissions, housing benefits, and planning applications);
- insurance claims
- requests for the council to engage with a third party over a problem which the council may have some control/regulating function
- ombudsman complaints (except for those which the ombudsman asks the council to deal with through its complaints procedure)
- complaints that have been allocated or investigated as members or MP's casework
- complaints from former and existing staff about human resources issues, including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions and discipline
- commercial or contractual matters, for example contracts for the supply of goods and services to the council
- freedom of information, and data protection subject access requests, or complaints about the decision, the information provided or how a request was handled
- complaints about restrictive contact arrangements, such as but not limited to, single point of contact arrangements and bans

6. Complaints and Enquires from an MP or Councillor

The complaints policy is intended for individual residents to seek resolution to an issue. A Member of Parliament or Councillor cannot make a formal complaint on behalf of a constituent.

The Council has a separate process for residents who decide to escalate their issues via a Member of Parliament or Councillor.

7. Timescales for making a complaint

Complaints must be made no later than six months after the date on which the matter occurred.

If there are good reasons for not having made the complaint within the above time frame and, if it is still possible for the Council to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly, we may decide to still consider the complaint.

8. Putting things right

The objective of redress is to rectify any mistakes or problems at the earliest opportunity. The Council will acknowledge faults when they occur and take responsibility for putting things right and avoiding a reoccurrence.

Following an investigation into a complaint, if it is recognised that the service did not meet the required standards, the Council will:

- apologise where appropriate
- rectify the mistake or problem within an agreed time frame and provide you with the service you should have received
- make a decision that should have been made earlier
- review practice, policy or procedure as appropriate

9. Data Rights

In the process of handling a complaint the council will be required to collect personal data and in some circumstances, this would fall under the category of sensitive personal data. It is necessary to collect, store and use this data to administer the process and to investigate all complaints made.

Confidentiality of this information is maintained by storing on a system which is purpose built for complaints with limited users being allowed access. This system also maintains the function to fully audit any access to the system.

The Council will keep information relating to complaints for a period of 7 years following the complaint being finalised. All information which is passed the retention period is securely destroyed.