

Littlehampton Town Council

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy sets out the formal Complaints Procedure of Littlehampton Town Council.

1.2 This Policy covers all activities of the Town Council and may be used by members of the public who have a specific complaint about the conduct, administration or operation of the Council.

1.3 A complaint can be defined as “An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of the Town Council’s service, actions or lack of action by staff, particularly where a problem has not been remedied to the satisfaction of the complainant”.

1.4 This Policy does not cover:

- complaints against services or actions for which the Town Council is not responsible such as those provided by District, County or Central Government, to whom the complaint must be made direct.
- complaints made about elected Town Council Members. These complaints must be made direct to the Monitoring Officer, at Arun District Council.
The address is:
Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 5LF.
The telephone number is 01903 737500.

2. Objectives of the Complaints Policy

2.1 The objectives of the Policy are:

- To provide the public with a formalised system if a complaint is made against the Town Council.
- To fix the timescales during which a complaint must be investigated.
- To state how the complaint will be investigated.
- To state who will investigate the complaint.
- To formalise how the response to the complainant will be made.
- To allow the Town Council to review its procedures to prevent a further occurrence of this nature.

3. Procedure for making a Complaint

3.1 Members of the public may make a complaint about Town Council services and administration in the following ways:

- To a Town Councillor.
- In person at the Town Council offices.
- By writing to the Town Clerk at the Council offices.
- Via the ‘contact us’ page of the Council’s website.

- By email.
- By telephone or fax.
- Through a representative, e.g., friend, advocate, or solicitor.

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

3.2 When making a complaint the complainant is encouraged to give as much detail as possible, for example:

- What service, policy, person or aspect of the Council is the complaint about?
- If appropriate, the date, time and location where an incident may have taken place and who may have been affected.
- The expectations held of Council services, particularly as a result of information provided or that staff or Councillors may have given.
- Name, address and contact details so that the Council can respond to the complaint.
- Anything else which would help to make the point and the subsequent investigation.

3.3. Should a complaint be specifically about the conduct of the Town Clerk the complaint should be sent to either the Town Mayor or Finance & Resources Manager who will conduct the investigation to progress the complaint.

4. The Complaints Process

4.1 Upon receiving a complaint the Town Clerk or Finance and Resources Manager will acknowledge this in writing to the complainant.

4.2 The complaint will be kept on file and logged in a spreadsheet specifically kept for this purpose.

4.3 The complaint should be resolved and answered within ten working days. If this is not possible the complainant should be advised of this in writing within ten working days.

4.4 The Town Clerk or Finance and Resources Manager should investigate the complaint and record the result in the Complaints spreadsheet and when the complaint has been investigated, write to the complainant with the results. If the complaint involves one of these Officers then another should deal with the complaint.

4.5 If the complaint cannot satisfactorily be resolved in this way, a panel will be convened comprising three of the following Councillors:

- Mayor,
- Deputy Mayor,
- Committee Chair,
- Committee Vice-Chair.

4.6 The complainant should be informed of the date of the panel and should be invited to attend either personally or with a friend.

4.7 The Panel should be conducted in accordance with the National Association of Local Council's guidance as set out in Legal Topic note 9, as set out in paragraph 5 of this policy.

4.8 A summary report on the Panel's judgement must be reported to the next meeting of the appropriate Committee or Full Council.

4.9 The Panel hearing is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure. The Panel and Town Council are not covered by the Local Government Ombudsman.

5. The Panel Hearing

5.1 The public and press are not permitted at Complaints Panel hearings. However the Town Mayor will report on the complaint at the next appropriate Council meeting. The order of business for the Complaints Panel meeting is in accordance with the National Association of Local Council's guidance as set out in Legal Topic note 9 as follows:

- Chair to introduce everyone.
- Chair to explain procedure.
- Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
- Members to ask any question of the complainant.
- If the Panel believe that the matter has legal or technical complexities, support, (in the form of advice and guidance) from a Senior Officer of the Council, who has not been involved, or in exceptional circumstances from another Council, will be sought.
- If relevant, the Town Clerk or other proper Officer in attendance will explain the Council's position.
- Members to ask any question of the Town Clerk or other proper Officer.
- The Town Clerk or other proper Officer and the complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
- The Town Clerk or other proper Officer and the complainant to be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary both parties to be invited back).
- Clerk or other proper Officer and complainant return to hear the decision or to be advised when the decision will be made.
- Following the conclusion of the meeting the complainant will be advised of the decision of the Panel, which is final with no right of further appeal. This will be confirmed in writing within 7 days with details of any action to be taken.

6. Contact Details

Address:
Littlehampton Town Council,
Manor House,
Church Street,
Littlehampton,
West Sussex,
BN17 5EW

Telephone: 01903 732063

Email: lrc@littlehampton-tc.gov.uk

Fax: 01903 731690

Website: www.littlehampton-tc.gov.uk

Approved by Full Council on 31st March 2016