



Wimborne Minster Town Council

Complaints Procedure

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wimborne Minster Town Council (the Council) recognises that it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman but has adopted this Code to ensure that complainants are properly and fully considered. The Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints will help us to improve the services provided on behalf of residents, visitors and those working within the Town.
- 1.2 The Council does not consider formal complaints against councillors, as prescribed by law. These are dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct by Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer (see point 4.4 below). A full copy of the Council's Code of Conduct is available from the Council's offices and on the Council's website.
- 1.3 All other complaints should be addressed to the Town Clerk and will be dealt with promptly to maintain public confidence.
- 1.4 Should the complaint be in regard to the Town Clerk, it should be addressed to the Town Mayor.
- 1.5 A fair and courteous response will be given in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all the pertinent facts.

2. Aim

- 2.1 The aim of this procedure is to swiftly investigate all complaints in an impartial manner and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the Council.

3. Definition

- 3.1. People's perceptions differ widely. It is therefore very difficult to give a precise definition of a complaint. However, for our purposes, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service undertaken by the Council or any of its employees or contractors.



3.2. More specifically, a complaint is where:

- The Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does
- The Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of established practice
- The conduct or behaviour of an employee or contractor is unsatisfactory
- The established levels of service delivery are not reached.
- A person does not understand or is not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists
- An adopted and known procedure is not followed
- Maladministration is alleged.

3.3. This complaints procedure will not apply to complaints made anonymously.

4. Complaints process

4.1 If you have a complaint the first priority is to raise the issue with the Council. To do this, please contact the Council by telephone, email, in person or in writing, giving names and addresses and relevant dates with as much information as possible. Please clearly state that you wish to make a complaint. The appropriate details for contacting the Council are:

- telephone on 01202 881655
- email office@wimborne.gov.uk
- in person or by letter to Wimborne Minster Town Council, 37 West Borough, Wimborne Minster, Dorset, BH21 1LT

If you need any specific help or general guidance about the Council's procedures or about any specific complaint, please contact the Town Clerk at Wimborne Minster Town Council, 37 West Borough, Wimborne Minster, Dorset, BH21 1LT or by telephone 01202 881655 or by email office@wimborne.gov.uk

4.2 Informal Complaint

4.2.1 The Council will seek to resolve all complaints informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.

4.2.2 An informal complaint is made to the Town Clerk who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek resolution.

4.2.3 Should it not be possible to resolve a complaint informally the complainant may escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.

4.2.4 Should, in the opinion of the Town Clerk or Town Mayor, the complaint be of a serious nature, the complaint shall be escalated to a formal complaint.

4.2.5 The Town Clerk shall maintain logs of informal complaints about staff and the council.



4.2.6 There is no defined process for an informal complaint; but full records must be kept of any communications and attempts at resolution.

4.3 Formal Complaints

4.3.1 Where possible, the Council would wish to solve any complaint informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged

4.3.2 All formal complaints shall be acknowledged within 14 days. Complainants shall be provided with routine updates on the progress of investigating ongoing complaints.

4.4 Formal Complaints about Councillors

4.4.1 The Town Council does not consider formal complaints about its members.

4.4.2 Members are required to comply with an adopted Code of Conduct.

4.4.3 A formal complaint about a member should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer of Dorset Council who will arrange the investigation of the complaint. Dorset Council has its own policies for dealing with such complaints. The contact details for the Monitoring Officer are: The Monitoring Officer, Dorset Council, or email jonathan.mair@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

4.4 Formal Complaints about Officers/Employees

4.4.1 Formal complaints about an employee of the Council must be made in writing to the Town Clerk setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.

4.4.2 Complaints will be referred to the appropriate Line Manager and be processed in accordance with the council's disciplinary policy.

4.4.3 Complaints about the Town Clerk must be made in writing to the Town Mayor, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.

4.4.4 The complainant will be informed that the complaint will be progressed under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and at the end of that process will receive a response to the complaint.

4.5 Formal Complaints about the Council, Committees or Decisions

4.5.1 Complaints about the activity or decisions of the council should be made to the Town Clerk in writing, providing any additional information that will enable the complaint to be investigated.

4.5.2 The complaint shall first be considered by the Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Chairman of the relevant committee who shall seek to resolve the issue or explain the background to the decision. The panel may escalate the complaint to the appropriate committee or Full Council should they consider they are unable to resolve it.

4.5.3 Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the panel, the panel may at its discretion refer the complaint to the appropriate committee or Full Council where the complainant will be invited to address the meeting.

4.5.4 Records shall be kept detailing all complaints, actions undertaken and the outcome.



5. Vexatious complaints

- 5.1 A vexatious complainant is one who persists unreasonably with their complaints or makes complaints in order to inconvenience the Council rather than genuinely resolve an issue. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly.
- 5.2 If such complaints affect the Council's ability to undertake its work and provide its services to others, it may alter the way it deals with complaints by not acknowledging or responding to vexatious complaints. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.
- 5.3 If a complainant is to be classified as vexatious they shall be informed so and given a timescale of how long this will remain the case.
- 5.4 Should a vexatious complainant make a new complaint about new issues these will be treated on their merits

6. Putting things right

- 6.1. If following the investigation into the complaint the Council is found to be at fault, every effort will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 6.2. Where subsequent actions or simply the passage of time prevents resolution, other actions may be appropriate which may include a local settlement. A local settlement is defined as action taken to restore a complainant to a situation he or she would have been in if the fault had not occurred.
- 6.3. When considering a local settlement, the remedy will need to be appropriate to the injustice and may be reduced where a complainant has contributed to the injustice suffered.
- 6.4 Unlike for District, Unitary or County Councils, there is currently no external agency or government body which can investigate a complaint if you are not satisfied with the initial consideration of your complaint. However, if you are not satisfied with action taken by the Town Clerk, you should write to the Town Mayor via our address or website. The Town Mayor will review the complaint, and all of the paperwork relating thereto, and if he/she believes it appropriate will submit the complaint to a Committee of the Council for consideration. In order to preserve any confidentiality issues, the Committee of the Council will normally deal with your complaint in private session and your details will not therefore be released publicly.

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