

Chilton Town Council



COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Chilton Town Council aims to provide excellent quality services for the benefit of people who live, work or visit the Town. However things can sometimes go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and take steps to improve our services.

The Town Council sees all customer comments and feedback as a good way of evaluating its services. Complaints and comments are an important part of this process and help us to learn and develop. The Town Council aims to use this information to help drive improvements.

Definition

Compliments and Comments

Compliments – Thanking the Town Council for something done, or done particularly well.

Comments – We recognise that sometimes members of the public simply want to register a comment about a council service, and do not wish to pursue a complaint. In this case we will ensure a record of the comment is maintained and appropriate action is taken on the comment. Where compliments/comments are received by the Council an acknowledgement will be communicated within 3 working days. They will be forwarded to the appropriate relevant service committee.

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a response, a lack of response, the standard of service you have received or disrespect from a council employee that cannot be resolved through the normal day to day operational processes of the service involved.

A complaint can only relate to a service that the Council already provides. It cannot relate to requests for new services or services provided by other local authorities. However, information provided may highlight gaps in service provision that may be relevant to future consideration and should be recorded and actioned as a comment.

The following list is a guide to the range of complaints which are covered by this Complaints Policy:

- Failure to provide a service or to deliver to an acceptable service standard
- Issues regarding the attitude of staff and or their actions, lack of actions
- Dissatisfaction with the manner in which council policy and procedure has been carried out
- Discrimination of any form as set out in the Equality Act 2010

What is not a complaint?

The following are excluded from this policy:

- A request for a service
- A request for information or an explanation
- An insurance claim against the Council
- A matter which is, or maybe, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings

What do I do if I am unhappy with one of your services?

You can complete the complaints form on the following page. We will send you an acknowledgement and inform you who is dealing with your complaint within three working days of receiving your complaint form.

Alternatively you can make your complaint to the Town Clerk in writing giving details regarding your complaint.

There are two stages to the Council's complaints procedure:

Stage One

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three working days of contacting us. The Town Clerk will investigate your complaint and reply to you within ten working days.

If you are unhappy with the Town Clerk's reply you can appeal to the Council's Appeals Committee, which leads to stage two.

You may choose to appeal because:

- you think a finding or penalty is unfair
- additional new evidence comes to light – hearsay or unsubstantiated cannot be accepted
- you think a procedure was not used applied correctly

Stage Two

You may appeal to the Council's Appeals Committee who will consider, the evidence, based on the criteria set above, and provide a final response.

You may attend the meeting to present details of your complaint. This will also provide an opportunity for members of the Panel to discuss your complaint with you.

The Panel will need written details of your complaint and copies of any supporting documentation at least 7 days before the meeting.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within 7 working days together with details of any action to be taken.

The decision of the General Appeals Panel will be final. There is no further right to appeal.

How we make sure everyone is treated fairly?

We recognise and value all of the people who live, work and visit Chilton and want to make sure that everyone can use the complaints system. We want to make sure we treat you fairly when making any complaint about us.

To help us treat you fairly we ask you to tell us your sex, age, ethnic origin and if you are disabled. If you are using the complaint form, these questions are included although not compulsory.

The information you give is confidential. We only use it to check that we treat all groups of people fairly and we do not discriminate against you.

If part of your complaint is about equal opportunities or discrimination, please tell us. We will make sure we look into that for you.

Vexatious/Repetitive Complaints

The Council may choose to give a decision on a complaint, without a formal investigation, where it considers the complaint to be deliberately vexatious or repetitive.

How can I complain?

Chilton Town Council

You can complete the complaints form (attached) giving us full details of the service you are complaining about.

If you would like to talk to someone or send a written complaint by post and unsure who to contact please telephone the Council offices on 01388 721788 or email info@chiltondurham-tc.gov.uk where someone will be able to assist you.

If you are making a complaint, what would you like the Council to do to put things right?