



Southwold Town Council

Complaints Policy

Introduction

Southwold Town Council is committed to providing a good standard of service to all residents of the Town. Sometimes things go awry, and the Council needs to know so that it can investigate, put things right and prevent a recurrence.

The Council welcomes all feedback. If, however, a member of the public wants to make a complaint, about acts or omissions of the Council – then this policy sets out the procedure.

This policy does not apply to:

- Complaints about the substance of policy decisions made by the Council (although members of the public may make comments or ask questions during the public open session in every Council and Committee meeting)
- complaints about the conduct of an individual Councillor (see page 3)
- complaints by an employee of the Council about the Council's actions as an employer

Informal Complaint

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through the following procedure.

Informal complaints can be made by telephone, email or by calling in person at the Council Office. The complaint will be handled by the Clerk.

Complaints should always be directed through the Council Office and not through individual Councillors. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints.

It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route. However, if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint, or if the initial complaint is so serious that an informal approach is insufficient, then the formal complaints process should be followed.



Formal Complaint

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. If a formal complaint is being raised against the Clerk, then the process as detailed should be followed, but the Chairman of the Council should be informed instead of the Clerk.

See Formal Complaints Procedure in Appendix A

Timings

The Town Council will try and adhere to the timings outlined in this policy, but for example in the case of a complex complaint, or the absence of a member of staff who is involved in the complaint, the timings may vary.

Should this occur then the complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.

Anonymous complaints

Generally all complainants should provide their name and full contact details. Unless it is apparent from the nature of the complaint that anonymity is justified, anonymous complaints will not normally be considered.

Impact on Council Staff

A formal complaint is a serious matter. A complaint against a member of the Council's staff could result in disciplinary action, or, in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal from the Council's employment.

The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence or discussion with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally, against any member of its staff. This is to protect the employment and privacy rights of all employees of the Council.



Complaints against Councillors

This policy does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor.

Any such complaint should be addressed to:

The Monitoring Officer
Waveney District Council
Town Hall
High Street
Lowestoft
NR32 1HS

Vexatious Complainant Behaviour

The Town Council may treat as vexatious a disproportionate, unreasonably repetitive, abusive, or otherwise unreasonable complaint, or a complainant who, because of the nature of his/her contacts with the Council, adversely affects the Council's operation. Examples of such contacts would be pursuing complaints in inappropriate ways, pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance, or pursuing complaints which have already been investigated and determined.

If a complaint or complainant is considered to be vexatious, the Council will decide what action to take and will notify the complainant of its decision promptly in writing, with reasons.

Adopted MARCH 2015

Reviewed September 2016

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