



SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY



1. Purpose

This policy sets out the procedure for handling complaints fairly, consistently, and transparently. It applies to complaints from members of the public about the Town Council as an organisation, as well as complaints regarding the Town Council staff. The aim is to provide a clear process for raising and resolving concerns, ensuring that all complaints are addressed promptly and appropriately in line with the Council's commitment to high standards of service and accountability.

2. Before processing a complaint

All formal complaints about the Town Council must be submitted in writing.

The complainant will be asked at the outset whether they wish the complaint to be treated confidentially.

All personal data will be handled in accordance with the Town Council's Privacy Policy and GDPR obligations.

Complaints should normally be sent to the Town Clerk by e-mail to townclerk@saxmundham-tc.gov.uk.

Complaints concerning the conduct of Town Council staff should be addressed to the Chair of the Town Council. Such complaints will be considered, and any response agreed, by the Staffing Committee at a properly convened meeting. Individual members must not personally respond to complaints regarding staff conduct on behalf of the Town Council.

3. Receipt of the complaint

Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing within seven working days, indicating the following information:

- Who will be dealing with the complaint (e.g. title of member of staff, a particular committee or sub-committee)
- The timeframe for investigating the complaint
- Whether there will be an opportunity for the complainant to make verbal representations (and bring a friend when doing so) and when this will occur
- The timeframe for determining the complaint
- Whether there is an opportunity to appeal the outcome of the complaint and an explanation of the appeal process
- Whether the complaint will be treated as confidential (most likely)
- Confirm the next steps in the complaints procedure

4. Investigating the complaint

The Town Council will investigate the facts of the complaint and collate relevant evidence.



If the complainant is to be invited to make a verbal representation they will be invited to a meeting with the Town Clerk (or other nominated officer) or to attend a meeting of the Committee dealing with the complaint.

Before the meeting, and within a specified reasonable period, the complainant shall provide the Town Clerk (or nominated officer or Committee as applicable) with any new information or other evidence relevant to the complaint, and the Town Clerk (or nominated officer), or the Chair of the relevant Committee, shall provide the complainant with new information or evidence relevant to the complaint.

5. Meetings with the complainant (if applicable)

If the complainant is invited to a meeting, the Town Clerk, nominated officer or Chair of the Committee dealing with the complaint should explain how the meeting will proceed.

The complainant should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the Town Clerk (or other nominated officer), or by members if a meeting is held by Committee.

The Town Clerk (or other nominated officer) or the Chair of the Committee will have an opportunity to explain the Town Council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant.

The Town Clerk (or other nominated officer), or the Chair of the Committee, and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their respective positions.

The complainant should be advised when a decision is likely to be made and when it will be communicated.

6. After the complaint has been decided

Within four weeks of receipt of the complaint, the Town Council will write to the complainant with the outcome of the complaint, to include the following:

- Whether it has upheld or rejected the complaint
- The reasons for the decision
- Details of any action to be taken

If a more complex complaint requires longer, the complainant will be advised of revised timescales.

7. Record Keeping

Adequate records of complaints and any actions taken will be securely retained by the Town Council, in accordance with data protection regulations and the Town Council's retention policy.