

Deal Town Council Complaints Procedure and Policy

Introduction: Deal Town Council welcomes comments and contributions about the services we deliver and recognises that complaints are a useful way of alerting us to ways in which we can improve.

Policy: The council recognises that mistakes and misunderstandings occur and that such instances can consume a disproportionate amount of time and can have an adverse effect on the council's reputation. The approach adopted in this policy and procedure is about complaint rectification, resolution and learning.

The Policy Objectives:

- Provide a fair complaints' procedure which is clear and easy to use.
- Publicise the existence of its complaints' procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- Make sure that everyone in the council knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- Make sure complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- Gather and use information to help us improve what we do.

The Definition: A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the council's activities. Typically, a complaint may arise when:

- We have done something wrong.
- We have not done something we should have done.
- We have not treated someone in a professional or civil manner.
- We have not achieved a standard that we have set for ourselves

Complaints that are excluded:

- A complaint by an employee against another employee; these matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Complaints against councillors; these are dealt with by Dover District Council's monitoring officer.
- If it is a year or more since the complainant became aware of the issue
- A previous or similar complaint has been made and considered.
- It is a persistent or vexatious complaint with no grounds.
- The complaint is being made to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Consequently, if issues can be dealt with outside this policy to the satisfaction of a complainant, then this procedure should not be deployed.

Procedure: The procedure isn't a substitute mechanism for resolving relatively minor issues: these should be addressed as part of the day-to-day operation of the council. It is a mechanism for addressing major service failures, persistent service deficiencies, and poor attitude.

Complaints should normally be addressed to the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will decide who should consider and respond to the complaint: this will normally be the Communications Officer, Deputy Town Clerk, or the Town Clerk.

If the complaint is specifically about the Town Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Staff Liaison panel. The Chairperson of this panel will decide how the complaint should be investigated.

On receipt of a written complaint the Town Clerk (except where the complaint is about their own actions), shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving them an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.

Acknowledgement of all complaints will take place within ten working days.

The Town Clerk shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint resolved by direct action with the complainant and will also notify of any complaints not yet resolved.

If the Council wishes to discuss any outstanding complaints, due regard must be paid to any proceedings in hand by the Grievance Panel to ensure this is not compromised in any way.

The Chairperson of the Council will consider whether the circumstances warrant the complaint being discussed in the absence of the press and the public as Exempt Business. However, any decision on a complaint shall be made public.

Once any decision is made it will be communicated as soon as possible in writing to the complainant along with notification of any intended action to be taken.

Contact Details:

For further information or clarification regarding a complaint please contact:

The Town Clerk
Deal Town Council
Town Hall
High Street
Deal
Kent.
CT14 6TR

Tel: 01304 361999

E-mail: townclerk@deal.gov.uk

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes in legislation or best practice.

Reviewed and agreed: FC March 2024

