

Complaints Policy

Ensuring Fair Resolution and Continual Improvement

Effective organisations understand that handling complaints efficiently and fairly is not only a legal or ethical obligation but also a valuable opportunity for learning and growth. A robust complaints policy provides a clear framework for addressing concerns, promoting transparency, and ensuring that every voice is respectfully heard and acted upon. This document sets out the principles, procedures, and practices that underpin a comprehensive complaints policy.

1. Policy Statement

Our organisation is committed to providing a high standard of service to all stakeholders. We recognise, however, that sometimes things may not go as planned. When this happens, we encourage feedback and complaints in order to understand issues, resolve them to the satisfaction of all parties where possible, and continually improve our services. All complaints will be handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received from customers, clients, service users, suppliers, and members of the public regarding any aspect of our services or conduct. It covers both informal and formal complaints, when received via email, online forms, or in writing.

This policy is only appropriate for complaints that are the responsibility and control of this council, any alleged criminal activity should be referred to the police and an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct (Councillors) should be referred to the district council monitoring officer.

This complaints procedure is not a means of redress for employees or for councillors – members should refer to the grievance or disciplinary policies as appropriate. The council's members are expected to work together professionally even if they hold differences of opinion.

Members are free to raise matters of concern in respect of council business by the submission of motions (points for discussion) on the agenda for the relevant meeting where the issue can be formally considered and resolved.

When a complaint is made against this council it is treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the council, not as a complaint against the individual employees or member(s) of the council.

3. Our Principles

- **Accessibility:** The complaints process is easy to access and understand.
- **Transparency:** The procedure for making and handling complaints is clearly outlined and available to all.
- **Impartiality:** Every complaint will be assessed on its merits and handled without bias.
- **Confidentiality:** Complaints are treated sensitively, and information is shared only with those involved in the resolution process.

- Responsiveness: Complaints are acknowledged and resolved within a reasonable timeframe.
- Accountability: Staff and Officials are responsible for acting on complaints and implementing improvements where necessary.
- Continuous Improvement: Insights from complaints are used to improve our service and prevent future occurrences.

4. What is a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its employees, or contractors that affects an individual or group.

5. Procedure for Making a Complaint

If you have an issue with something that this council has done or is doing and feel a complaint might help to rectify matters please email or send a letter to the council for the attention of the Clerk. The addresses are at the end of this document under 'Contact'.

Make sure you provide a clear explanation of the issue, dates, persons involved and the desired outcome. The complaint will be acknowledged within 7 working days, and if not possible to resolve in this response will be informed of the process and likely timescales.

6. Handling of Complaints

The process is likely to include:

- Reviewing the complaint and speaking with all relevant parties.
- Investigating the facts in a fair and impartial manner.
- Keeping the complainant informed of progress.
- Providing a written response that outlines findings, conclusions, and any actions to be taken.
- If dissatisfaction remains, explaining the options for further review or appeal.

7. Timeframes

- Acknowledgement of complaints: within 7 working days – where possible.
- Initial response: within ten working days, or an update if investigation is ongoing.
- Final response: ideally within twenty working days, although more complex complaints may require additional time, in which case the complainant will be kept informed.

8. Recording and Monitoring

All complaints and their resolution will be recorded in a secure system. Personal information will be handled in compliance with data protection laws.

9. Learning from Complaints

Complaints are considered valuable feedback. Each one is reviewed not only for immediate resolution but also for patterns and underlying issues. Where appropriate, systemic changes will be made to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

10. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

While every effort is made to deal with complaints respectfully, the organisation reserves the right to terminate correspondence or investigation of complaints that are abusive, repetitive without new information, or clearly pursued with malicious intent. Such decisions will be made by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Council and communicated with an explanation.

11. Appeals and Escalation

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their complaint, they have the right to seek advice from TVBC who may or may not be able to help depending on the nature of your complaint.

13. Communication of the Policy

This policy is publicly available online, and upon request. We encourage feedback on the policy itself to ensure it remains clear, fair, and effective.

14. Review of the Policy

This complaints policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is current and fit for purpose.

15. Related Documents

- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy

16. Contact Information

For further information or to submit a complaint, please contact:

Mail : Upper Clatford Parish Council, King Edward VII Memorial Hall, Upper Clatford, SP 11 7QL

Email: clerk@upperclatford-pc.gov.uk