



Complaints Policy

The policy is overseen by the Internal Committee and was last updated in April 2021.

Introduction

1. The Council recognises the importance of Complaints as they provide a chance to put things right if there has been an error, and to make sure that the same mistake is not completed.
2. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Town Council or its staff.
3. The Council recognises that it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman but has adopted this Code to ensure that complaints are properly and fully considered.
4. The Town Council does not consider formal complaints against councillors. These are dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct by Cheshire East Council's Monitoring Officer.
5. All other complaints should be addressed to the Town Clerk and will be dealt with promptly to maintain public confidence.
6. Should the complaint be in regard to the Town Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Council.
7. A fair and courteous response will be given in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all the pertinent facts.

Informal Complaint

8. The Town Council will seek to resolve all complaints informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.
9. An informal complaint is made to the Town Clerk who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek resolution.
10. Should it not be possible to resolve a complaint informally the complainant may escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.

11. Should, in the opinion of the Town Clerk or Chairman, the complaint be of a serious nature, the complaint shall be escalated to a formal complaint.
12. The Town Clerk shall maintain logs of informal complaints about staff and the council.
13. There is no defined process for an informal complaint; but full records must be kept of any communications and attempts at resolution.

Formal Complaints

14. Where possible, the Town Council would wish to solve any complaint informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.
15. All formal complaints shall be acknowledged within two weeks. Complainants shall be provided with routine updates on the progress of investigating ongoing complaints.

Formal Complaints about Councillors

16. The Town Council does not consider formal complaints about its members.
17. Members are required to comply with an adopted Code of Conduct.
18. A formal complaint about a member should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer of Cheshire East Council who will arrange the investigation of the complaint. Cheshire East Council has its own policies for dealing with such complaints.

19. The contact details for the Monitoring Officer are:

The Monitoring Officer,
Cheshire East Council,
Westfields,
Middlewich Road,
Sandbach,
CW11 1HZ

Or email: monitoringofficercec@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Formal Complaints about Officers/Employees

20. Formal complaints about an employee of the Town Council must be made in writing to the Town Clerk setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.

21. Complaints will be referred to the appropriate Line Manager and be processed in accordance with the council's disciplinary policy.
22. Complaints about the Town Clerk must be made in writing to the Chairman, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.
23. The complainant will be informed that the complaint will be progressed under the council's disciplinary policy and at the end of that process will receive a response to the complaint.

Formal Complaints about the Council, Committees or Decisions

24. Complaints about the activity or decisions of the council should be made to the Town Clerk in writing, providing any additional information that will enable the complaint to be investigated.
25. The council will only consider complaints about its formal (council/committee) decisions where the complainant puts forward missing information or evidence to suggest that the council has erred in its decision making.
26. The complaint shall first be considered by the Town Clerk, Chairman of the Council and Chairman of the relevant committee who shall seek to resolve the issue or explain the background to the decision. The panel may escalate the complaint to the appropriate committee or Full Council should they consider they are unable to resolve it.
27. Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the panel, the panel may at its discretion refer the complaint to the appropriate committee or Full Council where the complainant will be invited to address the meeting.
28. Records shall be kept detailing all complaints, actions undertaken and the outcome.

Vexatious complaints

29. A vexatious complainant is one who persists unreasonably with their complaints or makes complaints in order to inconvenience the Council rather than genuinely resolve an issue. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly.
30. If such complaints affect the Council's ability to undertake its work and provide its services to others, it may alter the way it deals with complaints by not

acknowledging or responding to vexatious complaints. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.

For further information and details of the Council's approach to Vexatious Complainers please see separate **Vexatious Complainers Policy**.