

# Complaints Procedure

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The complaints procedure is for all complaints to the Council, whether these are minor, serious, informal or formal and apply to all services provided by the Council.

1.2 Separate arrangements as prescribed by law are in place in respect of Councillors. (These arrangements are referred to at paragraph 6 below)

1.3 The Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints will help us to improve the services provided on behalf of residents, visitors and those working within the town.

## 2. Aim

2.1 The aim is to swiftly investigate all complaints in an impartial manner and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the Council.

## 3. Definition Of Complaints

3.1 People's perceptions differ widely. It is therefore very difficult to give a precise definition of a complaint. However, for our purposes, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service undertaken by Crewkerne Town Council or any of its employees'

3.2 More specifically, a complaint is where:-

- The Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does;
- The Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of established practice;
- The conduct or behaviour of an employee is unsatisfactory;
- The established levels of service delivery are not reached;
- A person does not understand or is not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists;
- An adopted and known procedure is not followed;
- Maladministration is alleged.

## 4. What To Do If You Have A Complaint

4.1 The first priority is to raise the issue with the Town Council. To do this, please contact the Town Clerk, who is the officer responsible for dealing with these matters, as quickly as possible.

4.2 Your complaint should be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing, giving names and addresses and relevant dates with as much information as possible. The appropriate details for contacting the Town Clerk are by telephone on 01460 74001; by email [town\\_council@crewkerne-tc.gov.uk](mailto:town_council@crewkerne-tc.gov.uk); in person; or by letter to Town Hall, Market Square Crewkerne TA18 7LN.

4.3 In many cases, it will be possible for an issue to be dealt with straight away and the source of the complaint resolved immediately.

4.4 For more complex issues, it is much better to put these in writing so that a thorough investigation can be undertaken. Investigations will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Then the Clerk will refer the matter to the appropriate committee to examine the issue. Councillors may decide to set up a site visit to help clarify the problem. You should expect to receive a formal response within twenty days of the date of the original complaint.

4.5 If the complaint involves the Town Clerk personally, the complainant should address the complaint direct

to the Mayor.

## **5. What If You Are Not Satisfied**

5.1 If you are not satisfied with action taken, you should write within 28 days and you may ask that the complaint is further considered clearly giving reasons why and the outcome you would like. Your complaint will be subsequently referred to the Council's Grievance Committee where the appropriate agreed procedure will take place.

5.2 In order to preserve any confidentiality issues, the Committee of the Council will normally deal with your complaint in private session and your details will not therefore be released publicly.

## **6. What If I Have a Complaint About the Behaviour of a Particular Councillor (or Councillors)**

6.1 Councillors are required to observe a 'Code of Conduct'. If you feel a Councillor has broken any of the rules in the Code of Conduct, you can complain to the Standards Committee at South Somerset District Council. This Committee is a group of Councillors appointed by South Somerset District Council to help maintain and promote high ethical standards

6.2 More information about the Code of Conduct relating to Councillors and about how to make a complaint is available on South Somerset District Council's website [www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk) or you can contact the Democratic Services Officer or the Monitoring Officer.

## **7. What Type Of Behaviour Is Covered By The Code Of Conduct**

7.1 Broadly, the Code requires Councillors:-

- Not to discriminate unlawfully;
- To treat others with respect;
- Not to bully any person
- Not to intimidate any person involved in any investigation or proceedings about someone's misconduct
- Not to do anything to compromise the impartiality of Council employees;
- Not to disclose confidential information;
- Not to stop anyone gaining access to information they are entitled to;
- Not to conduct themselves so as to bring their office or the Council into disrepute;
- Not to use their position to improperly secure an advantage, or disadvantage, for anyone;
- Not to misuse the Council's resources
- Not to use the Council's resources for unauthorised political purposes;
- To declare any personal, pecuniary or prejudicial interest in any matter that comes before the Council and, if appropriate, not to take part in the decision. Where the interest declared is deemed to be prejudicial, Councillors are not permitted to take part in the decision on that matter;
- To register certain financial and other interests (a copy of the register is available for public inspection).

8.2 A full copy of the Code of Conduct is available on the Council's website at:  
[www.crewkernetown.org/TownCouncil](http://www.crewkernetown.org/TownCouncil)

## **9. Assistance or Advice relating to procedures or a complaint**

9.1 If you need any specific help or general guidance about the Council's procedures or about any specific complaint, contact the Town Clerk at Town hall, Market Square, Crewkerne, TA18 7LN, or telephone 01460 74001 or email [town.council@crewkerne-tc.gov.uk](mailto:town.council@crewkerne-tc.gov.uk).