

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – ADOPTED ON 17/9/12

BACKGROUND / SCOPE

- Newbury Town Council takes all complaints and feedback seriously. It is one of the best ways of learning and ensuring excellent service provision.
- The aim of this procedure is to ensure that all complaints from members of the public are handled swiftly and courteously to a resolution acceptable to all parties.
- Internal staff complaints are covered by the separate Employee Grievance Policy.
- Complaints about Councillors, if they cannot be swiftly resolved through discussion, are to be referred to the District Council Monitoring Officer.
- Complaints may arrive through a variety of mechanisms, including via e-mail, via letter, via verbal report to a Councillor or Officer, via a question raised at a Council meeting, via Councillor's surgeries. There may be other sources.
- Discretion must be used in complaints aired in public – e.g. via the letters pages of the local paper and each considered as to whether it requires a response.
- Anonymous complaints will be filed but not responded to.
- Repetitive complaints from the same individual may lead to the complainant being categorised as vexatious, with limitations on further responses.

PROCEDURE

- Depending on source, and content, each complaint is passed to an appropriate owner. Where a complaint is dispatched to multiple recipients, those recipients must swiftly decide amongst themselves who will be the owner.
- It is that owner's responsibility to establish further detail as required from all relevant sources by all relevant means and report back findings as swiftly as possible to the complainant and seek the complainant's assurance that their complaint has been dealt with. If necessary, interim reports of progress and estimates of future timescales should be provided.
- In general, the route of the complaint will be the route of response. i.e. e-mails will be responded to by e-mail, letter by letter.
- Records of all complaints are to be kept – which in most cases will be automatic as part of the correspondence entered into.
- The complainant always has the option of escalating any complaint to the Chief Executive Officer, the Leader of the Council or the Town Mayor for further investigation and resolution.
- If no other resolution can be found, the complaint should be brought to a Council or Committee meeting for formal discussion and resolution.

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