

Complaints Policy

(Adopted by the Council June 2019)

Introduction

Tuxford Town Council aims to deliver high quality services where the customer is at the heart of everything it does. We welcome all customer feedback and aim to deal with customers' concerns in a fair and consistent way.

Tuxford Town Council wants to listen to its customers' views and value their contributions. We learn from good practice as well as any mistakes and build upon past experiences to improve the future. This Policy applies to all of the services Tuxford Town Council provides

Our Policy

A customer has a right to:

- Complain
- Be listened to
- Have their complaint investigated and resolved as quickly as possible
- Have their concerns taken seriously

We aim to: -

- Be accessible and uncomplicated
- Promote customer satisfaction
- Identify areas where services can be improved
- Learn from good practice
- Learn from mistakes
- Implement improvements in processes and procedures

Tuxford Town Council promotes the right of its customers to raise a concern or make a complaint if they think something has been done incorrectly or if they feel it has been addressed poorly. Similarly, customers may complain if they feel something that ought to have been done has not been done. The Council also promotes the right of customers to comment on a Policy or Council decision which may affect them and express a compliment if things have gone well for them. Complaints will be investigated objectively, fairly and thoroughly in a positive manner and we will

endeavour to resolve the complaint. We will have mechanisms in place to ensure that any required lessons and improvements have been achieved following customer feedback.

What is a complaint, comment or compliment?

Complaint:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet with the quality of a service or with a failure to provide a previously agreed service, or with the attitude or behaviour of a member of staff or councillor

Example:

- a customer complains that the Council has failed to follow its own procedures

Comment:

A comment is a general statement about policies, practices or a service as a whole, which have an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.

Examples:

Positive Comment:

- It's great to see Tuxford Town Council promoting the town

Negative Comments

- I am not happy that you have not supplied further dog bins

Compliment:

An expression of praise. It is a positive statement about a service provided by or on behalf of the Council, or about the helpfulness, attitude or approach of a member of staff.

Example:

- I would like to thank the Town Clerk for the prompt and efficient way in which they dealt with my query. They were most helpful and friendly.

When the Complaints Procedure is Not Appropriate

The Town Council's Complaints Procedure will not be used in respect of the following types of complaint:

1. Financial Irregularity

The Town Clerk or Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item.

If the complainant is not satisfied, the Town Clerk or RFO will advise the complainant of their statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to S16 Audit Commission Act 1998. On other matters, it may be necessary for the Town Clerk or RFO to consult the auditor.

2. Criminal Activity

The Town Clerk should refer the complainant to the Police.

3. Member Conduct

In the event of a complaint relating to a Member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, the complainant will be advised to make their complaint to Bassetlaw District Council's Standards Committee.

4. Employee Conduct

A complaint relating to the conduct of an employee will be dealt with via the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and through the Town Clerk.

Complaints that an employee may have about a colleague will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Grievance Procedure. Complaints that an employee may have about a member will be referred to the Town Clerk or, if the Town Clerk is implicated, through the Chairman

Time Limit for making a Complaint

Our aim is to put things right if they go wrong as quickly as possible, so it is important to recognise there is a **one-year** time limit (from the date of the incident giving cause for the complaint) for making a complaint. However, the time limit may be extended if it is still possible to consider the complaint effectively and efficiently or if there are other circumstances which may enable resolution of the complaint.

Confidentiality

The Council will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand, eg. where matters concern sensitive information or where third parties are concerned.

Should the complaint progress to the Town Council's Stage 3 complaints procedure, it will be to the discretion of the Committee whether this meeting will be held in confidence with the exclusion of the public and press and this decision will be final.

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when the complaint clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other procedure should or has been taken.

These matters will be referred to the Town Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Town Clerk may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant and will inform the complainant to this effect, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be referred to the Town Clerk, and may be dismissed at their discretion, according to the type and seriousness of the allegation

How to give your feedback

A customer can make a complaint, compliment or comment either in person or by:

- Telephone 01777 870192
- Email: clerk@tuxfordtowncouncil.gov.uk
- In person at our office:

Tuxford Town Council, The Beeches Community Centre, Birch Court, Tuxford, Notts
NG22 0NF

In writing to The Town Clerk at the Town Council offices (address as above)

- By contacting your local Councillor (details on our website)

Where possible, complaints should be made in writing to the Town Clerk or other nominated officer

Complaints

Unfortunately, things do not always go as planned or people feel upset or aggrieved by an action taken. It is for these reasons that the Town Council operates a complaints procedure, to ensure that we serve our residents fairly, courteously, professionally and in a non-discriminatory way at all times. Our aim is to put things right if they go wrong as quickly as possible. All staff are trained to deal with routine difficulties as they arise.

What Happens Next?

The complaints process can be explained using the following steps:

- **Recording your complaint:** the person receiving your complaint will record it. This enables us to monitor the number and type of complaints, which assists us in improving our services.
- **Acknowledging your complaint:** whenever possible your complaint will be dealt with at the first point of contact. If this is not possible your complaint will be acknowledged within **5** working days, and you will be given the details of the person looking into the matter.
- **Responding to your complaint:** the person responsible for responding to your complaint will contact you to agree the best way to deal with your particular complaint. Our aim is to give you a full response within **14** working days. If for any

reason we cannot do this, we will let you know when you expect to receive a response. In any event we will endeavour to respond within **21** working days.

- **Room for error:** if we have made a mistake we will apologise and try to put things right. We will explain what actions we intend to take as a result of your complaint.
- **Your right to respond:** on receipt of a response, you have up to **21** working days in which to decide whether to accept or reject the actions/ recommendations we have stated to resolve your complaint.

Stage 1

Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily at stage 1. In the first instance, please contact the appropriate member of staff, tell them your complaint and in most cases the complaint can be dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties.

Stage 2

If you are not happy with the outcome or response at stage 1, you can appeal to the Chairman at Tuxford Town Council under the guidelines and timescale listed above. The Chairman will thoroughly review and where necessary carry out a further investigation of your case following the deadlines in the guidance and timescale outlined above.

Stage 3

If you are still not satisfied with the response from the outcome at stage 2, you should contact The Town Clerk who will arrange for the complaint to be dealt with at the next appropriate meeting of the Council's Finance & Services Committee within the guidelines and timescales listed above, who will carry out a further investigation on your behalf.

The Complainant will be invited to attend this meeting and to submit copies (at least 7 clear working days in advance) of any correspondence or details that they wish the Committee to be informed of. The Council will provide the Complainant with copies of any documentation which it wishes to rely on at the meeting (at least 7 clear working days in advance of the meeting).

The Complainant may be accompanied or represented at the meeting if they wish.

It is possible that the Committee is unable to make a decision at the meeting as more information may be required for the Committee to make a fully informed decision. The Complainant will be advised of this along with details of how the matter will be further considered.

The decision of the Committee will be confirmed in writing to the complainant within seven working days of the decision being reached.

These 3 stages complete Tuxford Town Council's complaints procedure.

If you have followed all of the above and are still unhappy, you can contact one of the following (1-3 not in any particular order, you may contact all or none of the below)

1. The District Councillor for your area

The District Councillor are your local representatives at Bassetlaw District Council, and they can be contacted via Bassetlaw District Council's website or telephone: 01909 533533. Please note that Bassetlaw District Council itself has no jurisdiction over Tuxford Town Council; we are independent councils, however it may be that in the event of mediation, a District Councillor may be able to assist further.

2. The Member of Parliament for this Town Council area

Robert Jenrick MP

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA – further contact details can be found online

3. The Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of all government departments, councils and politicians. It provides a service which is confidential and free of charge. The Ombudsman has the same powers as the High Court to obtain information and documents. The Ombudsman will normally only accept a complaint if the Councils Complaints Procedure has been correctly and fully followed.

Local Government Ombudsman, The Oaks, No. 2 Westwood Way, Westwood Business Park, Coventry, CV4 8JB

Web: www.lgo.org.uk

Tel: 0845 602 1983

Complaint against a Councillor

The above procedure should not be followed if your complaint specifically concerns the conduct or behaviour of a Town Councillor. Complaints of this nature are dealt with under the Town Councils Code of Conduct for members. Tuxford Town Council has an adopted Code of Conduct, and this sets out rules governing the behaviour of its members.

If your complaint concerns the conduct or behaviour of a Town Councillor, please contact the Town Clerk who will provide you with a copy of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and details of the procedure to be followed. These complaints are dealt with in the first instance by the Standards Committee at Bassetlaw District Council which is responsible for considering complaints of a breach of Code of Conduct by Town Councillors. Further details can be provided on request.

Complaint against a member of staff

The stages 1-3 as outlined above may be followed by the Town Council in progression of complaints about a staff member. Alternatively, complaints of this nature may be dealt with through the internal disciplinary process; the Town Council follows the rules, regulations and procedures of ACAS for this process. If a complaint is about a decision which an officer has made, then it is likely that the complaint will follow stages 1-3 as above. If the complaint is about the specific behaviour or attitude of a staff member then it is likely that this complaint would follow the internal disciplinary process. Upon receipt of any complaints of this nature, a decision will initially be reached which will determine the process to be followed.

How Will We Put Things Right?

If we have made a mistake we will apologise and tell you what action we will take to ensure the same situation does not arise again for you or future customers.

Comments

If you wish to make a comment, either positive or negative, in relation to a policy decision, practice or service, this will be recorded, and your comment may be acknowledged within **3** working days. When we review our Policies, we take into consideration any comments made about a Policy.

Compliments

If you wish to express a compliment this will be recorded and shared with the Councillor or member of staff, it relates to. We may acknowledge your compliments within **3** working days. All compliment statistics will be reported as part of our Annual Report and the information gathered from them will assist in improving our service to all our customers.

Freedom of Information Requests

If your complaint makes any requests for provision of documents or information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, then this Act will be followed and the appropriate rules, regulations and schedule for this Act will be progressed (either instead of or as well as the Town Council's complaints policy).

Record Management and Data Protection

All aspects of the Customer Feedback Procedure meet the requirements of the legislation regarding Data Protection and Freedom of Information. Any personal information obtained in relation to a complaint is only to be used for that purpose.

Evaluation and Monitoring

We will ensure that full records are kept of the nature and treatment of every complaint, comment and compliment considered under this procedure. Particular attention will be paid to the lessons learnt, the nature of complaints and trends, the timeliness of responses and resolutions. This procedure will be reviewed at least annually at the Town Council's Annual General Meeting and may also be reviewed periodically to ensure continued good practice

10. Policy History and Review

This policy was approved by Tuxford Town Council on 20 June 2019 and took effect from 10 June 2019. This policy was reviewed on 21 November 2024.

In the event of any significant change to the legal position on Complaints, any relevant statutory requirements or any other related matter, this policy will be subject to review. In the event of no change the policy will be reviewed by November 2029.

Approved: Chairman of the Council

Date:/...../.....

Folio Reference:

Review Reference

Review Date	Recorded Amendment to the Policy	Signed
21 November 2024	No Amendment	