



PUBLIC COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

Fleet Town Council Councillors and Officers serve you, whether you live or work in Fleet or you are a visitor. In everything we do we try to put you, our customers first. However, like all organisations we can make mistakes.

Fleet Town Council makes a commitment to you, to listen to your complaint and respond to it quickly and fairly. We will do everything we can to put matters right.

Complaints about an individual councillor should be directed to the Town Clerk.

2. Complaints Procedure

Informal route: we would ask you to see if you can resolve the complaint with the officer or member concerned before proceeding further. The officer will take your name, address and the details of your complaint.

Formal route: to make a formal complaint you are requested to complete the complaint form attached to this leaflet. Other persons can make your complaint on your behalf, if you wish. Details of the procedure are set out in the Code of Practice in paragraph 4 below.

If you require help to complete the complaint form, please ask a member of the Council staff.

If you are not sure which of the officers is responsible for your complaint please contact the Town Council reception where a member of staff will give you further advice.

If you prefer, you can also put your complaint in writing together with the complaint form.

The Council will not consider complaints anonymously.

Help is also available from the Citizens Advice Bureau or your Town Councillor. His or her name can be obtained from the Town Council offices, the Council's website, or from any copy of the Council's newsletter "Town Talk".

3. Where to forward your complaint

Please forward your complaint by the following methods:

- ◆ Personally at the Harlington during office hours

Office hours – Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Fleet Town Council
The Harlington
236 Fleet Road
Fleet
GU51 4BY

- ◆ By post
Fleet Town Council
The Harlington
236 Fleet Road
Fleet
GU51 4BY

- ◆ By telephone: (01252) 625246

- ◆ By e-mail: clerk@fleettowncouncil.org.uk

4. Code of Practice

- 4.1 If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or the Town Clerk and it is not possible to remedy the complaint immediately, the complainant will be asked to put his/her complaint in

writing to the Town Clerk and will received assurance on receipt that the matter will be dealt with quickly.

- 4.2 If a complainant indicates that he/she would prefer not to put the complaint to the Town Clerk then he/she should be advised to put it to the chairman of the Council.
- 4.3 When a written complaint is received the Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Council, as the case may be, will (except when the complaint is about his/her own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant, but will not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Town Clerk or a Councillor without notifying the person complained of and giving him/her the opportunity to comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint. Where the Town Clerk or Chairman of the Council receives a written complaint about his/her own actions, he/she shall immediately refer the complaint to the Council. Complaints relating to the conduct of members and officers will be reported to the Establishment Committee, who will, where appropriate, set up a panel of councillors to review the complaint.
- 4.4 The Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
- 4.5 The Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Council shall bring any written complaint which cannot be settled to the next meeting of the Council, and the Town Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered.
- 4.6 The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and the public.

If the matter is a complaint about the Town Clerk, and the Council or the Chairman of the Council believe that the matter could lead to a disciplinary hearing then the matter must be heard with the press and the public excluded. If this is the case, if the complainant is an employee, even if the matter is being dealt with initially out of the context of a formal disciplinary hearing, then the employee is entitled to have a representative present to act on their behalf as set out in the Employment Relations Act 1999 s 10. The matter before the Council in this case will be to establish whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and the action that should then be taken. The proceedings at this stage cannot be a formal disciplinary hearing, which must be convened on a separate occasion in the proper manner.

- 4.7 As soon as possible, after the decision has been made, any action to be taken will be communicated in writing to the complainant.
- 4.8 In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the Council should consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant.

5. Dissatisfied with the Complaint Decision?

If you are dissatisfied with the Town Council decision, you are advised to consult the Local Government Ombudsman or seek advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

6. Important Notes

Some complaints are covered by specific laws or Council Regulations and may be dealt with through different procedures. Advice on these procedures will be given to you if necessary.

7. Assurances

All complaints will be dealt with confidentially within the Town Council's offices. The Town Council will not reveal your personal details to an outside party without your permission.

The complaints procedure ensures that your complaint will be dealt with as quickly and as fairly as possible.

The Town Council will use your complaint to help improve our services and to avoid similar problems in the future.

The service you receive from the Town Council will not be affected because you have complained.

Your complaint will be investigated by the Town Clerk personally.

Complaints relating to an individual officer will be dealt with by the Town Clerk.

8. Fleet Town Council's Complaints Code

The Council will make sure that its staff are aware of the entitlement of customers to make a complaint and to be guided positively and efficiently through the complaints procedure.

The overall aim of the complaints system is to deal with complaints: **swiftly, fairly and with understanding.**

Approved by Council April 2012 –revisions to P & F Cttee 16 October 2017

Remember these are your rights and every effort will be taken to resolve complaints satisfactorily.