

# Haverhill Town Council

## Complaints Policy



**HAVERHILL**  
TOWN COUNCIL

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## 1. Introduction & Policy Statement

Haverhill Town Council seeks to provide excellent service to the people of Haverhill. When things go wrong, the Council is committed to learning from its mistakes. To this end, the Council values complaints as sincere feedback and will treat complainants with respect, consider the substance of their complaint objectively and respond appropriately, including explaining how a complaint has helped improve what we do.

## 2. How we will handle a complaint

- 2.1 Complaints regarding the conduct of an individual Councillor is dealt with through a separate procedure, the Code of Conduct, which can be found on our website. This document sets out the statutory and local regulatory framework governing Councillors' behaviour. Potential breaches should be reported the Monitoring Officer at West Suffolk Council.
- 2.2 Complaints may come in any form. It is not necessary for a complaint to be in writing.
- 2.3 Complaints not in a written format need to be noted by the Officer/Councillor, who should first establish if the complainant is expressing frustration with the 'system' or wishes to have their complaint formally considered. The opinion of the officer/Councillor as to the 'validity' of a complaint is not a relevant consideration when establishing whether the complaint requires a formal response.
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure complaints are responded to and that the Council takes action as a result of them.
- 2.5 If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk or other paid officer, they should be advised to put it to the Chairman of the council and provided with the details to do so.

### **3. Informal Complaints**

Informal complaints should be acknowledged politely and considered seriously even if the complainant does not want to 'cause a fuss'. Regardless of the mood of the complainant, the Council needs to see if there are lessons to learn.

### **4. Formal Complaints**

- 4.1 The clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant either when the matter will be considered or, if it is appropriate to elevate the complaint, when the committee responsible for the matter of the complaint next meet.
- 4.2 Complaints should be dealt with promptly – Target is completion within 5 working days. If this is not possible, then by no later than the fifth day, a holding response shall be sent to the complainant explaining the delay and outlining what is happening.
- 4.3 The Clerk has the delegated authority to agree with, reject and resolve complaints.
- 4.4 Where the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the matter and wishes to take it further, they can take it up with the Chairman. This must be set out in any final response from the Clerk.
- 4.5 The Chairman has the delegated authority to agree with, reject or resolve complaints that are brought before them.
- 4.6 If the Complainant still remains dissatisfied, they should approach the Clerk with a request to consider the matter at Full Council.
- 4.7 The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the meeting and reported to the next council meeting in public.
- 4.8 The Council's decision will be final. Depending on the matter under dispute, there may be grounds for referral to the local government Ombudsman, but generally the ombudsman does not cover the work of Parish Councils.

**Adopted by the Council January 29<sup>th</sup> 2018**