



Oundle Town Council provides many services to community groups, sports teams, companies and individuals. We try to get our service delivery right every time, but there are occasions when users of our services maybe dissatisfied with our performance, for any number of reasons. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Town Council.

Our feedback form on the website offers you the opportunity to post compliments as well.

We always try to solve any problems as quickly as possible. But we like to stop problems happening in the first place if we can. You can help us to do this by telling us of any complaint you have. This will give us a chance to stop similar problems happening again. You can also make suggestions about how we can improve our services. To this end we will conduct an annual review.

The aim, when receiving complaints, is to resolve them quickly and directly.

### **Step One**

If you are not satisfied with one of our services you should complain to the person who first dealt with the matter. He or she is usually the best person to help you and answer your questions promptly and it gives them a chance to put the matter right. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved amicably through this route.

Informal complaints can be made by telephone, letter, email or a visit to the Council offices. The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint. The Clerk will be kept informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution. Complaints should always be directed through the Council offices, not through individual Councillors. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints.

It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route

### **Step Two**

However, the Council appreciates that on occasions this informal approach may not resolve the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious that the formal complaints process should be followed. If your complaint relates to Freedom of Information or Data Protection, then you should complain to the Clerk to the Council.

Give details of your complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Council. Should your complaint be about the Clerk to the Council, your letter should be addressed to the Mayor of Oundle Town Council.

You should receive a reply within 10 days, but if the matter is complex, or other organisations need to be contacted, it may take longer. We will still let you know what action is being taken.

The Clerk to the Council or Mayor shall report to the next meeting of the Council the nature of any written complaint and the action taken to resolve this. The identity of the complainant can be withheld, if desired.

### **Step 3**

If you have complained to the Clerk but are still not happy, you can take the complaint a step further by writing to the Mayor, who will arrange for a complaints hearing. You should give all the details of your complaint and say what you have done to try to get it put right. We hope you will only feel the need to take your complaint to this stage as a last resort.

The process for complaints of this nature are as follows:

#### Before the Meeting:

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to The Clerk or other nominated Proper Officer;
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to The Clerk or other Proper Officer, they may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council;
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council or by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints;
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish;
5. 7 clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

#### At the Meeting:

6. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public;
7. The Chairman to introduce everyone;
8. The Chairman to explain procedure;
9. The Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint;
10. Members to ask any question of the complainant;
11. If relevant, the Clerk or other Proper Officer to explain the Council's position;
12. Members to ask any question of the Clerk or other Proper Officer;

13. The Clerk or other Proper Officer and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order);
14. The Clerk or other Proper Officer and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back);
15. The Clerk or other Proper Officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting:

16. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Please note:

Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 12 July 2007 and any complaints about Councillors are now subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board or the Commissioner for Wales. If you were to have any such complaint, you should contact the Monitoring Officer at East Northamptonshire Council for further information. Oundle Town Council holds relevant information and contact details, which can be given to you.

Complaints against policy decisions made by the Council should be made in writing addressed to the Clerk to the Council, who will bring them to the attention of the Council at its next meeting. However, please note paragraph 36 of the Council's Standing Orders which says that:

- '(a) A decision (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special resolution, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least 4 members of the Council, or by a resolution moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a Committee.
- (b) When a special resolution has been disposed of, no similar resolution may be moved within a further six months.'