

EPPING TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

At Epping Town Council, we endeavour to deliver high levels of service at all times. But sometimes things go wrong. If you do have a complaint, we will do our best to resolve it for you using the procedures and guidance below.

To avoid placing less serious matters before Council, the Town Clerk must determine which complaints are minor in nature and which are serious. The Town Clerk is also responsible for trying to resolve all matters if this can be achieved. The following procedure is based on the principle that complaints will be placed before Council only after the Clerk has attempted to resolve the matter or in circumstances where the matter is clearly, in the opinion of the Clerk, a matter which relates to serious policy issues. It is also a principle of this procedure that complaints regarding the Clerk's behaviour or actions will not be handled by the Clerk but will be dealt with by Council.

1. This Policy sets out procedures for dealing with any complaints about Epping Town Council's administration, policies and procedures. A complaint may be submitted to the Town Clerk either in writing, by fax or by sending an email. In exceptional circumstances (disability, language difficulties or similar circumstances) council officers will assist complainants to make a written statement.
2. At Epping Town Council complaints are dealt with by the Town Clerk who will investigate and inform the complainant of the outcome. Complaints which the Town Clerk cannot resolve are put before full Council.
3. For all written complaints a holding reply will be sent from the Town Clerk, within five working days of receipt, unless the complaint can be dealt with in full. The complainant should be informed as soon as a decision has been made and the nature of any action to be taken has been decided. If the matter cannot be decided within twenty working days of the initial complaint received, written advice regarding the method of dealing with the matter should be given to the complainant.
4. Some complaints may return to the Town Clerk if the complainant is not satisfied with the response. The Clerk will discuss any such complaints with the Chairman of Council and will report back to Council once the Clerk is satisfied they have dealt the complaint as fully as possible and fulfilled Council's procedural and statutory obligations in relation to the complaint.
5. Where the Town Clerk receives a complaint about a Council employee, the Town Clerk will investigate and the employee will be given an opportunity to comment. The Clerk will inform the complainant of the outcome. If however the complaint is, in the view of the Clerk, of a more serious nature, the matter will be put before a dedicated meeting of Corporate Governance Advisory Committee meeting, which will report back to Council at its next Ordinary

meeting. Under the advice of the Clerk, Council will determine the substance, justification and action to be taken in response to the complainant, and additionally whether or not disciplinary action should be further considered.

6. Where the Town Clerk or Town Mayor receives a written complaint about the Town Clerk's behaviour or actions (but not relating to a decision made in accord with, or consequent upon, council's stated policy) the complaint will be considered at a dedicated meeting of the Corporate Governance meeting, which will report back to Council at its next ordinary meeting. The Town Clerk shall be given an opportunity to comment to council on the matter. For complaints against the Clerk, Council will determine the substance, justification and action to be taken in response to the complaint, and additionally whether or not a disciplinary action should be considered. Prior to a discussion of disciplinary implications, council will consider its need to have the assistance of a qualified advisor such as a representative of the Essex Association of Local Councils.

7. The Town Clerk shall report to the next meeting of the Council (after the matter has reached a conclusion) any serious written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.

8. If a complaint is put before Council, Epping Town Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public and so recorded in minutes. The complainant should be informed as soon as a decision has been made and the nature of any action to be taken has been decided. If the matter cannot be resolved at the first meeting of Council where it is discussed, written advice regarding the method of dealing with the matter should be given to the complainant.

9. Epping Town Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

10. Complaints against Councillors should be sent to the Monitoring Officer at Epping Forest District Council **only**.