

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Stalham Town Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how the Council will try to resolve your complaint.
2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.
3. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:
 - 3.1. complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
 - 3.2. complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council in July 2012 and, if a complaint against a councillor is received by the council, it will be referred to the Standards Committee of North Norfolk District Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of North Norfolk District Council.
4. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.
5. You may make your complaint about the council's procedures or administration to the Clerk. You may do this in person, by phone, or by writing to or emailing the Clerk. The addresses and numbers are set out below.
6. Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
7. If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Council.

8. It will usually be appropriate for the circumstances leading to the complaint to be investigated by the Clerk on behalf of the Council. Complaints of a serious nature or any that relate directly to the Clerk will be dealt with by the Finance Committee. Where appropriate, the complainant will be invited to make verbal representations to the person (or committee) investigating. In normal circumstances, the complainant will be notified in writing (e-mail if appropriate) of the outcome within three months of lodging the complaint. This will include whether or not the complaint is upheld, reasons for the decision, details of any action taken and information about the right of appeal.
9. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the full Council (as appropriate) and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint. Appeals received more than one month after the date of the decision letter/e-mail will not be considered.
10. Confidentiality
All complaints will be treated as confidential. Even where the complainant specifically waives their right to confidentiality, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data. Any meeting of the Council, or a committee or sub-committee considering a complaint or inviting the complainant to make representations will exclude the public. Agendas and minutes will not disclose personal data or financial, sensitive or confidential information relating to an individual complainant or a third party.
11. Local Government Ombudsman
The Local Government Ombudsman deals with complaints against principal authorities (district, borough and county councils) and certain other public sector bodies. It is not responsible for handling complaints against a town or parish council, except where it is working with a principal authority (through a joint committee), or it is exercising the functions of a principal authority.