

## **CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE**

### **1. Purpose & Scope**

This policy sets out:

- how residents, customers and partners can make a complaint; and
- how the Council will receive, handle, respond to and learn from complaints.

### **2. What is a Complaint?**

For our purposes, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of the Council's service, actions, or lack of action—particularly where a problem has not been remedied to the individual's satisfaction.

Examples include: poor service; failure to provide an agreed service; failure to respond to a request; concerns that the Council has exceeded its powers; unacceptable Officer conduct; failure to follow an agreed procedure; maladministration (delay, muddle, bias or confusion).

Not covered: requests for a service; requests for information or an explanation of policy; complaints about Councillors; complaints made more than 12 months after the event unless there are exceptional reasons; complaints about services delivered by another local authority. (Complaints about councillors must be sent to Waverley Borough Council's Monitoring Officer.)

Third-party complaints: We accept complaints via a representative where appropriate (e.g., a funeral director for a recently bereaved person), subject to data protection.

### **3. Our Principles**

We aim for a process that is:

- accessible (website/leaflet; phone, email, letter or in person);
- simple (few clear stages);
- speedy (tight, publicised deadlines);
- fair and confidential;
- effective (addressing all points and providing appropriate remedies); and
- informative (we monitor, report and learn).

### **4. Roles & Responsibilities**

- All Officers: recognise and log complaints, give their name, and handle Stage 1 where it relates to their service.
- Support Services Executive: maintains the confidential complaints log.
- CEO (Proper Officer): oversees handling, authorises certain remedies (Section 7), reports annually to Members.

### **5. How to Make a Complaint (Public Information)**

- a. Talk to the Officer you've been dealing with. Explain what went wrong, how it affected you, and what you want us to do to put it right. Many issues can be resolved quickly at this point.
- b. If you remain dissatisfied, write to the CEO. We will acknowledge within 5 working days and aim to provide a full response within 10 working days. If we cannot meet that timeframe, we will write by day 10 to explain why and give a timetable.

- c. If still dissatisfied (or if your complaint concerns the CEO), write to the Chair of the Policy & Management Committee. We will acknowledge within 5 working days and provide a full response within 30 working days.

### **Contact Details**

Chief Executive Officer, Godalming Town Council, 107–109 High Street, Godalming GU7 1AQ  
Tel: 01483 523575 | Email: [townclerk@godalming-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@godalming-tc.gov.uk) | Web: [www.godalming-tc.gov.uk](http://www.godalming-tc.gov.uk)

### **Complaints About Councillors**

Monitoring Officer, Waverley Borough Council, The Burys, Godalming GU7 1HR | Tel: 01483 523333.

## **6. How we Handle Complaints (Officer Guidance)**

- Receiving complaints: Recognise complaints made by phone, email, letter, or in person. Capture the service/matter complained of and the remedy sought. Officers must give their name. Pass details to the relevant service and/or CEO promptly.
- **Acknowledgement & response times:**
  - Acknowledge within 5 working days.
  - Provide a full response within 10 working days wherever possible.
  - If not possible, issue a holding update on day 10 with a timetable.
- Who responds: The officer responsible for the service responds at Stage 1, noting the complainant's right to ask the CEO to handle it. Responses must explain what went wrong (if anything) or why the complaint isn't upheld, and signpost Stage 2 rights.
- Recording: Log every complaint in the confidential complaints file. The Support Services Executive records dates for receipt, acknowledgement, and response.

## **7. Remedies**

Where a complaint is upheld, the aim is to put the complainant as far as possible into the position they would have been in had things not gone wrong. Consider:

- a. providing the service sought;
- b. changing procedures to prevent recurrence and assuring the complainant;
- c. a written and/or personal apology (a modest goodwill gesture may be appropriate);
- d. replacement of damaged items;
- e. reimbursement of specific financial loss.

Remedies (a)–(b) may be delivered by Officers within their normal powers.

Remedies (c)–(e) require authorisation by the CEO (or Deputy Chief Officer in their absence) and must be reported to the relevant committee. The Council has no specific policy for financial compensation for time/trouble, distress or inconvenience; any such payment is at the discretion of the relevant Committee.

## **8. Stage 2 Review (Member Oversight)**

If matters cannot be resolved by Officers—or where there is a legitimate reason Officers should not handle the case—the complaint passes to the Chair of the Policy & Management Committee, who decides whether the full Committee, the Chair of Staffing or the Staffing Committee, or another route is appropriate. If a Committee considers a complaint, it will do so in confidential session (the complainant may attend with a companion) and should aim to consider it at the next meeting.

## **9. Confidentiality & Data Protection**

The complaints file is kept confidential and personal data is shared only where lawful and necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

**10. Monitoring, Learning & Reporting**

The Support Services Executive monitors complaints and key dates. The Town Clerk reports annually, in summary, to the Policy & Management Committee. Significant complaints are reported as they arise—particularly where a Committee authorisation is required for the remedy.

**11. Equality Of Access**

We will make reasonable adjustments so complainants can access the procedure (including accepting third-party representatives where appropriate).

**12. Review & Approval**

This consolidated policy supersedes the separate “How to Make a Complaint” and “How to Handle a Complaint” documents once adopted by Full Council. (Date Adopted – 13 November 2025 – Min No. 354-25).