

CHARD TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Readopted 9th May 2023)

1. Chard 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 we shall try to resolve your complaint.
2. 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 is also the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings.
3. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how the council has dealt with your concerns.
4. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:
 - 4.1. complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between the council as employer and a council employee. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures. If your complaint relates to an individual employee, you may be assured that it will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.
 - 4.2. complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Town Council. If a complaint against a councillor is received by the Town Council, it will be referred to the Standards Committee of South Somerset District Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of South Somerset District Council.
5. You may make your complaint about the council's procedures or administration to the Town Clerk (or in the Clerk's absence the Deputy Town Clerk). You may do this in person, by phone, or by writing to or emailing the Town Clerk. The addresses and numbers are set out below.
6. The Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk) will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days. Wherever possible, the Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk) will try to resolve your complaint within a further 10 working days.
7. If you do not wish the Town Clerk (or in the Clerk's absence the Deputy Town Clerk) to deal with your complaint, you may make your complaint directly to the

Mayor who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated by another senior officer or, if it is appropriate, will appoint an independent investigating officer.

8. The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk or investigating officer (as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, contacting you to obtain further information as necessary as well as obtaining information from employees or members of the Council.
9. The investigating officer will normally notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. In exceptional cases, the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept fully informed of the reasons for the delay.
10. If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the Mayor for review. When reviewing the complaint, the Mayor can either respond directly to you with the outcome of the review or convene a Complaints Panel before making a decision.
11. If the Mayor decides to convene a Complaints Panel you will be invited to attend and explain your complaint. The investigating officer will respond and explain the reasons for reaching the decision taken. At the Mayor's discretion, you and the investigating officer may ask questions of each other. At the end, you will have the final word and both parties will be asked to withdraw while the Panel make a decision.
12. A decision will be made by the Complaints Panel and the outcome of the review and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint will be notified to you by the Mayor, either at the conclusion of the Panel meeting or within 7 working days.

In the first instance, all complaints should be directed to the Town Clerk who is the Council's proper officer at the address below.

Chard Town Council
The Guildhall
Fore Street
Chard
Somerset
TA20 1PP

Tel: 01460 239567