

A CUSTOMER GUIDE TO COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

INTRODUCTION

This policy and procedure applies to all Council employees and to employees and organisations who deliver services on behalf of the local authority. It reflects the Council's commitment to ensure all departments deliver a consistent approach in responding to and learning from our customers in order to deliver excellent customer services.

This procedure is in line with Copeland Borough Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy.

COMMENTS

How will we deal with a comment?

- We will record details of the comment and acknowledge receipt within 10 working days.

How will we respond to a comment?

- We will either explain how we will implement your suggestion or explain why we are unable to.
- We will thank you for helping us to improve Council services

COMPLIMENTS

How will we deal with a compliment?

- We will log details within the relevant department(s) and acknowledge receipt of your compliment within 10 working days.

How will we respond to a compliment?

- We will thank you for taking the time to let us know that we are providing a good service.

COMPLAINTS

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the Council or its staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

How to complain

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, letter, e-mail or via the Council's website.

Examples of complaints

- A delay in taking action without good reason
- A failure to provide a service
- Mistakes in the way a decision has been taken
- Not following the law or the Council's own policies
- Giving incorrect or misleading information
- Bias or unfair discrimination
- Rude, unhelpful or inappropriate behaviour by staff
- Poor/ lack of communication
- Failing to meet published or advertised service standards
- Failing to meet our statutory obligations

The procedure **does not** cover the following:-

- Initial requests for a service.
- Initial requests for information or explanation of Council policy or practice.
- Anonymous complaints, although we will record them for monitoring purposes.
- Complaints dealt with via an insurance claim
- Matters in which the complainant has a statutory right of appeal, or other statutory redress.
- Complaints by Council employees or former employees about employment matters as separate grievance procedures exist for these purposes.
- Complaints about the conduct of councillors (See 'Complaints about Councillors, p4)
- Complaints by Councillors in their capacity as Councillors rather than as service users.
- Allegations of financial impropriety or of criminal wrongdoing, which, if made, will always be referred to the Council's internal audit section or the police, as appropriate.
- Repeated complaints where the original complaint had been investigated, considered and responded to appropriately at each stage of the procedure, and no new element to the complaint has been introduced.

How will we respond to a complaint?

The Council has a 3 Stage procedure that is designed to support the effective management and resolution of complaints.

Stage 1 - All complaints received will be reviewed by the Customer Relations Officer who will try and resolve the matter to your satisfaction within 10 working days. If you are claiming financial compensation your complaint will enter the process at Stage 2.

Stage2 - If it is not possible for the Customer Relations Officer to resolve the complaint, they will forward the complaint to the relevant department to investigate and you will receive a response from the Service Manager within 15 working days.

Stage 3 - If you remain dissatisfied and make further representation to the Council, the complaint will be forwarded to the Council's Chief Executive or a Director for a final investigation and response within 10 working days.

Timescales - If an Officer is unable to conduct their investigation within the timescales allowed, they will contact you with an interim response, telling you when a final response will be given and explaining the reason for the delay.

Local Government Ombudsman.

If you, the complainant, are not satisfied with the final response from the Chief executive or Director you will be given information about your rights to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

They are only contactable by telephone or online in the first instance.

www.lgo.org.uk

Tel: 0300 061 0614

Complaints about the Chief Executive or a Director

Complaints about the Chief Executive or a Director should be addressed to the Elected Mayor.

Complaints about Councillors

The conduct of Councillors is regulated by the Localism Act 2011. Complaints should be directed in writing, by letter or e-mail, to:

The Monitoring Officer,
Copeland Borough Council,
The Market Hall, Market Place,
Whitehaven, Cumbria.
CA28 7JG
E-mail: codeofconductcomplaints@copeland.gov.uk

Helping the Council to improve its Services

Although our primary objective is to provide an effective means for our customers to make comments, compliments and complaints and have them resolved, another very important objective is to improve services and service delivery. Therefore it is important that the outcomes of any investigation in which mistakes or problems are identified are reported to the relevant department so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid a recurrence. Equally, reports of good service and practices should also be shared.

What remedial action is available if a complaint is upheld?

Where a complaint is found to be justified, the Council will, as far as possible, take remedial action to put the complainant in the position he or she would have been in if things had not gone wrong.

An apology will always be made. In some cases it may be possible to provide the complainant with the service which he or she is entitled to receive, but has not received and resulted in the complaint. In others, a change in procedures to prevent future difficulties for the individual complainant, or for customers in general, may be the solution.

There may be some circumstances where the complainant has sustained financial loss, damage or injury and the Council may wish to consider the question of financial compensation.