



Ilminster Town Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR USE IN COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE COUNCIL

Approved and Adopted By Council on 16 December 2014

The following procedure has been adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration.

When a complaint is made against the Town Council, Councillors or staff are likely to be mentioned or complained about. However, a complaint against the Town Council will be treated as complaint against the body corporate of the Council, not as a complaint against individual employees or Councillors.

This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of ~~a Member of the Town Council.~~ *a Town Councillor(s).* Such complaints should be made ~~through~~ *to the Monitoring Officer at South Somerset District Council.*

A complaint against the Town Council that involves a complaint about the conduct of its employees will be handled in accordance with the complaints procedure. If, following the outcome of the complaint, the Complaints Panel decides that here may be a need to take disciplinary action, this will be in accordance with the Town Council's Disciplinary Policy."

The Town Council will do its best to handle complaints as quickly as possible and as a guide it should take no longer than 12 weeks from the receipt of the complaint to the Complaints Panel advising its decision.

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Town Clerk. If the complaint is only notified orally to a councillor, or to the clerk to the council, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Town Clerk, he or she should be advised to address it to the Mayor.
3. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the complaints panel. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint is likely to be treated as confidential and how notice of it will be given on an agenda
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the Panel meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

6. The complaints panel shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the panel meeting in public.
7. The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii) members.
9. The clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) members.
10. The clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
11. The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, *both* parties shall be invited back.
12. The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision, but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

13. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
14. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.
15. Any decision made by the Complaints Panel will be reported to Council for information.