



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

"I'm not happy about this"

- a guide to making complaints about our services.

Commitment to quality.

A message from the Chairperson:

"Amble Town Council is committed to providing high quality services to its customers- but in any organisation things sometimes go wrong. Where people contact us to say we have not provided a satisfactory service, we treat this as a complaint and take it very seriously."

How can I make a complaint?

If you are dissatisfied with a service or the way you have been treated you can complain by:-

1. Telephoning or writing to the Town Clerk.
2. Visiting the Town Council Office
3. Contacting a councillor (a list of councillor's names and contact details is available at the Council Office or on the website- www.amble.gov.uk)

What is a Complaint?

The complaints procedure does not cover initial reports to the Council about problems or defects (such as a bin not emptied) but if you are not satisfied with the response you can use the Complaints procedure.

Neither is it an appeals system against Council decisions which were properly taken, or as a means of arbitration. It exists to check that everything is done properly and that correct procedures and policies were followed.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided by the Council, its employees or its contractors.

1. This Policy sets out procedures for dealing with any complaints that anyone may have about Amble Town Council's administration and procedures. It applies to the Town Council's employees and contractors. Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.

Complaints against policy decisions made by the Council shall be referred back to Council [but note Section 11 part b of the Council's Standing Orders which says that issues shall not be re-opened for four months].

2. If a complaint about procedures or administration as practised by the Council's employees or contractors is notified orally to a Councillor or the Town Clerk the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Town Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.



3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Town Clerk he or she should be advised to put it to the Chairperson of the Council.

4. (a) On receipt of a written complaint the Chairperson or the Town Clerk (except where the complainant is about his or her own actions), shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving him, or her, an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.

(b) Where the Town Clerk or the Chairperson receives a written complaint about the Town Clerk's own actions, he or she shall refer the complaint to the Chairperson of Council. The Town Clerk shall be notified and given an opportunity to comment.

5. Written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 10 working days of receipt, informing that an investigation will then be undertaken by the relevant committee or the full Council as appropriate and the results reported to the complainant in writing within 20 working days.

6. The Town Clerk or Chairperson shall report to the next meeting of the relevant Committee or Council as appropriate any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.

7. The Town Clerk or Chairperson shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the relevant Committee or Council as appropriate. The Town Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally. (Unless such a matter may be related to Grievance, Disciplinary or Standard Board proceedings that are taking, or likely to take place when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings when the complaint will have to be heard under Exempt Business to exclude any member of the public or the press, or deferred on appropriate advice received).

8. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.

9. As soon as may be practicable after the decision has been made it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.

10. The Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received and the complainant informed that the matter warrants extra investigations.

Date: May 2023 **Approving:** Full Council
Policy effective: Immediate **Date for next review:** May 2024

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