

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Introduction

This document sets out Cuxton Parish Council's policy on handling compliments and complaints.

Objectives

The objectives of Cuxton Parish Council's compliments and complaints policy are to provide a procedure which:

- is simple for customers to use and is equally accessible to all
- deals with problems as close to their source as possible and as quickly as possible
- ensures that compliments are relayed to the officers concerned
- gives customers confidence that their comments are listened to and that their complaints are being dealt with effectively
- takes action to solve problems and generates a positive attitude to feedback
- seeks to learn from feedback and prevent the recurrence of problems
- generates a consistent approach to compliments and complaints throughout the Parish Council

Approach

The complaints process has three stages (1, 2 and 3). The Council's aim is to resolve problems at stage 1, as close to their source as possible. Stage 1 also covers the receipt of compliments or other comments. Both compliments and complaints will be referred to the officer(s) responsible for the areas to which they refer.

Complaints which fall within the scope of other procedures, appeals or fault reporting systems, will be processed using those procedures. The customer will be kept informed of what is happening to their complaint.

Stage 1

Is at operational level with an open definition of a complaint: **"when customers do not feel they have received a satisfactory response to an expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action by the Council and when they wish to progress this to a formal complaint"**. It should be possible for most complaints to be resolved at this level.

Stage 2

Is at executive level. Here a complaint will be interpreted as any matter that has not been resolved at Stage 1 and which the customer wishes to take further.

Stage 3

Is at Council level and is used for those complaints that could not be resolved at Stage 2 and which the customer wishes to take further.

Eligibility to complain

The following are eligible to complain. (Eligibility is not dependent upon residence in Cuxton).

- I. Any individual or group receiving or seeking a service from Cuxton Parish Council. This includes children where appropriate.
- II. Anyone acting for an individual or group unable to complain personally.

The policy does not apply to issues raised by employees of the Parish Council in relation to their employment. It does, however, apply to members of the public who are seeking employment with the Council.

Confidentiality

Complaints made to the Council will be treated in confidence.

Customers who make their complaints public in the media may forfeit their right to anonymity.

Responsibility for procedures

Overall responsibility for the compliments and complaints procedure will lie with the Clerk except where the Clerk is subject of a complaint in which case responsibility falls to the Council Chair.

Response

Complaints will be accepted by text, email, fax, telephone, in writing or in person and acknowledged by letter or email. Responses to complaints will be in writing. The standard for responding to a complaint is to send an acknowledgement within 5 working days and a full response within a further 15 working days. This does not apply to complaints that fall within statutory complaints processes which may have a different timescale.

Remedies

The approach to remedies will be based on appropriateness, timeliness and consistency of application.

It is the Parish Council's policy to restore customers to the position they would have been in had things not gone wrong. However, this may not always be possible.

Reports

Reports on the operation of the complaints policy and procedures and statistical information from departments will be presented annually to Council.

Publication of this policy

Copies of this policy will be available to the public in accordance with the Parish Council's Publication Scheme.