

# Complaints Policy

RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE: POLICY & FINANCE

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This is a policy/procedure document of Saltash Town Council to be followed by both Council Members and Employees.

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**Current Document Status**

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**Document Retention Period**

Until superseded

## 1. Introduction

The Town Council recognises that it is not within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman, but has adopted this Code to ensure that all complaints are thoroughly and properly considered.

All complaints must be submitted using the Town Council's Complaint Forms (see Appendix A and B) and addressed to the Town Council. This ensures the matter is handled promptly by an officer and helps maintain public confidence.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the Town Council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken, or the service provided, by the Town Council itself or by a person or body acting on its behalf.

Complainant information will be handled confidentially and only shared where necessary to investigate the complaint.

A fair and courteous response will be provided in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all relevant facts.

Members of the Town Council who receive a complaint should inform the complainant that their concern has been forwarded to the appropriate Town Council officer or Town Clerk in accordance with the Complaints Policy, and that an officer will be in contact.

The Town Council invests in staff training and development and recognises its officers as competent and authorised to respond to complaints on its behalf. The Town Council supports officers in carrying out this responsibility and will uphold their responses unless there is evidence that a review is required.

The Town Council does not consider **formal** complaints against councillors. Such complaints must be made in accordance with the Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct and are dealt with by Cornwall Council's Monitoring Officer.

Complaints regarding Town Council staff should be marked 'Private and Confidential' and sent directly to the Town Clerk.

Complaints regarding the Town Clerk should be marked 'Private and Confidential' and sent directly to the Chair of the Town Council and the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

## 2. Types of Complaint

The Town Council will not acknowledge or consider any complaint or escalated complaint that is submitted anonymously or that fails to demonstrate civility and respect towards the Town Council or its staff, including the Town Clerk.

A complaint about the Town Council must:

- Be submitted using the Town Council Complaint Form (see Appendix A)
- Be addressed to The Guildhall, c/o the Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Council and submitted by post, or
- Be addressed to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Council and submitted by email to: [enquiries@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saltash.gov.uk)

Complaints Concerning Town Council Staff:

A complaint about any member of Town Council staff must:

- Be submitted using the Town Council Complaint Form (see Appendix B)
- Be addressed to the Town Clerk, marked 'Private and Confidential', and sent directly to the Guildhall by post or by email to [townclerk@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@saltash.gov.uk)

Complaints Concerning the Town Clerk:

A complaint about the Town Clerk must:

- Be submitted using the Town Council Complaint Form (see Appendix B)
- Be addressed to the Chair of the Town Council and the Chair of the Personnel Committee, marked 'Private and Confidential', and sent directly to the Guildhall by post or by contacting the Guildhall for the correct email addresses.

### Complaint

The Town Council will aim to resolve all complaints **informally** within 10 working days.

The officer who receives the complaint will assess the issue and seek to resolve it, keeping a record of all communication and actions taken.

The Town Council authorises officers to carry out this responsibility on its behalf and supports staff in listening to and noting the views of the complainant.

If the matter is serious, or cannot be resolved **informally**, it will be escalated. **to the formal complaints process.**

## Escalated Complaint

The Town Council will aim to resolve all **escalated** ~~formal~~ complaints within 40 working days.

Complainants will receive progress updates during the investigation of their complaint, except where the complaint relates to the Town Clerk or another member of staff. In such cases, updates may be limited to respect employment rights and the confidentiality to which all employees are entitled.

Complaints about a lack of action or the standard of a service, whether delivered directly by the Town Council or by an organisation acting on its behalf, will be referred to the relevant departmental manager for investigation and response, and if necessary, the Town Clerk.

Complaints concerning the Town Council's activities or decisions will be referred to the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk, along with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Council, will jointly consider the complaint and will either seek to resolve the issue or provide a clear explanation of the background and rationale for the decision.

If the Town Clerk, Chair, and Vice Chair are unable to resolve the matter, they may refer the complaint to the appropriate committee or to the Full Town Council for further consideration.

The Policy and Finance Committee will receive the complaint reporting log every six months. All information will be processed and reported in accordance with GDPR requirements and used to support learning and service improvement.

## 3. Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1

In order to raise a complaint, we encourage you to contact us **informally** in the first instance.

Saltash Town Council  
The Guildhall  
12 Lower Fore Street  
Saltash  
Cornwall  
PL12 6JX

Telephone: 01752 844846, or  
Email: [enquiries@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saltash.gov.uk)

Upon receiving a complaint, an officer will first seek to resolve the matter immediately by establishing whether relevant policies, procedures, and legislation have been followed, and ensuring that the complainant has not been unfairly disadvantaged.

If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately as a **an informal** complaint, the officer will refer the complainant to Appendix A and:

- Send an acknowledgement within 10 working days, confirming who is dealing with the complaint and providing an expected timescale for a full response.
- Send the complaint to the Town Clerk to be reviewed under **escalated complaints** **Stage 2** where a response will be received within 40 working days, or, if this is not possible, explain the reason for the delay and give a revised timescale.
- Correct any error or mistake identified during the investigation by following the correct procedure.

If the complainant is satisfied with the outcome, the case will be closed. A non-identifiable summary will then be added to the complaints recording log for learning and service improvement. The log is reported to the Policy and Finance Committee every six months.

### **Stage 2 Escalated Complaint**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Town Council response ~~at Stage 1~~ and advises accordingly, **Stage 2** **the escalated complaint** ~~of the complainant's~~ procedure is triggered.

- The Town Clerk will acknowledge the **escalated complaint** **Stage 2** request within 10 working days.
- The Town Clerk will investigate the complaint and report the findings to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Council. The complainant will be advised of the Town Council's decision within 40 working days, or if this is not possible updated on any delays, the reasons for them, and the revised timescale for a full response.
- The decision reached ~~at Stage 2~~ is final and will be upheld by the Town Council as the Corporate Body.

## **Vexatious Complaints**

A complainant may be considered vexatious when they persist unreasonably with their complaints or submit complaints with the intention of disrupting or inconveniencing the Town Council rather than seeking a genuine resolution. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Repeatedly raising the same or very similar issues after they have been addressed;
- Making serial complaints about a range of unrelated matters;
- Demonstrating unreasonable persistence, volume, or manner that goes beyond what is proportionate.

If such behaviour begins to impact the Town Council's ability to carry out its work or provide services to the wider community, the Town Council may modify how it handles further contact. This may include not acknowledging or responding to further vexatious correspondence. However, all communications will still be reviewed and logged to ensure that no new or significant information has been provided.

Where a complainant is formally classified as vexatious, they will be notified in writing, including an explanation of the reasons for the decision and the length of time the classification will remain in place.

Should a vexatious complainant raise a new complaint about a genuinely new issue, this will be considered on its own merits.

The decision to classify a complainant as vexatious will be made jointly by the Town Clerk, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Town Council together with the Chair and Vice Chair of Policy and Finance. This group has been given the delegated authority to act on behalf of the Town Council and will review the behaviour and circumstances leading to the concern, ensuring that the decision is fair, proportionate, and based on clear evidence. The outcome will be confirmed in writing to the complainant, including the reasons for the decision and the duration of the classification and recorded on the complaint reporting log received at a Policy and Finance Committee meeting.

#### 4. **Formal** Complaints about the Town Clerk or staff

**An escalated formal** complaint is a serious matter. Any complaint involving the Town Clerk or a member of staff may result in disciplinary action and, in cases of gross misconduct, could lead to dismissal from the Town Council's employment.

To comply with employment law and to protect the confidentiality to which all employees are entitled, the Town Council will not, under any circumstances, enter into correspondence or discussion with a complainant about any formal or informal action taken in relation to the Town Clerk or staff.

##### Submitting a Complaint About a Staff Member:

**Formal** Complaints about a Town Council staff member must be submitted in writing by completing the Complaint Form (see Appendix B). The completed form should be addressed to the Town Clerk. The form must be marked "Private and Confidential" and sent directly to the Guildhall either by post or by email to [townclerk@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@saltash.gov.uk)

Complaints concerning staff may be referred to the appropriate Manager and will be dealt with in accordance with employment law and the Town Council's employment procedures.

##### Submitting a Complaint About the Town Clerk:

**Formal** Complaints about the Town Clerk must be submitted in writing by completing the Complaint Form (see Appendix B). The completed form should be addressed to both the Chair of the Town Council and the Chair of the Personnel Committee, marked "Private and Confidential", and sent directly to the Guildhall by post, or by contacting the Guildhall for the correct email addresses.

Complaints involving the Town Clerk will be referred to the Personnel Committee, which will seek any necessary support or advice and will handle the matter in accordance with the Town Council's employment procedures and employment law.

## 5. Unreasonable Behaviour

The Town Council is committed to ensuring that all complainants are treated fairly, respectfully, and professionally. In return, the same standard of behaviour from those who contact or interact with the Town Council and its staff is expected.

The Town Council will not tolerate unreasonable behaviour, including:

**Aggression:** any intimidating, hostile, or physically threatening conduct toward the Town Council and staff.

**Abusive or offensive language:** including shouting, swearing, derogatory remarks, or discriminatory comments.

**Threats:** any behaviour that implies harm, intimidation, or harassment, whether explicit or implied.

**Repeated or excessive contact outside office hours:** staff are not required to respond when off duty and are not representing the Town Council unless wearing official Saltash Town Council identification (e.g., STC lanyard, uniform).

Where unreasonable behaviour occurs, the Town Council may take appropriate action to protect its employees, including restricting contact, setting communication boundaries, or in serious cases, involving the relevant authorities.

## 6. Complaints about Councillors

The Town Council does not consider complaints about its Members.

Saltash Town Council have adopted Cornwall Council's Code of Conduct and all Members are expected to comply with the Code.

A complaint about a Member should be addressed directly to the Monitoring Officer of Cornwall Council who will manage the complaint accordingly.

The contact details for the Monitoring Officer are:

The Monitoring Officer  
Floor 4 North Wing  
New County Hall  
Treyew Road  
Truro  
TR1 3AY

[councillorcomplaints@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:councillorcomplaints@cornwall.gov.uk)

## Appendix A

### Town Council Complaint Form

Please complete all sections of this form. Incomplete forms will be returned and will not be accepted.

#### 1. Your Details (required)

Full Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email Address:

Contact Telephone Number:

#### 2. Details of Your Complaint

Please provide a clear, concise and accurate outline of your complaint, including all relevant information that will help us assist you

DRAFT

### **3. Supporting Evidence**

List any supporting evidence or attach documents that are relevant to the complaint:

### **4. Desired Outcome**

Please tell us what you feel would resolve your complaint:

DRAFT

### **5. Declaration (Required)**

I confirm that the information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I understand that the Town Council may need to contact me to investigate this complaint.

Print name:

Signature:

Date:

### **6. Submitting Your Complaint**

Please return the completed form to:

Email: [enquiries@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saltash.gov.uk)

Post: The Guildhall, 12 Lower Fore Street, Saltash, PL12 6JX

## Appendix B

### Town Council staff, including the Town Clerk complaint form

Please complete all sections of this form. Incomplete forms will be returned and will not be accepted.

#### 1. Your Details (required)

Full Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email Address:

Contact Telephone Number:

#### 2. Details of Your Complaint

Please provide a clear, concise and accurate outline of your complaint, including all relevant information that will help us assist you

DRAFT

### **3. Supporting Evidence**

List any supporting evidence or attach documents that are relevant to the complaint:

### **4. Declaration (Required)**

I confirm that the information I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I understand that the Town Council may need to contact me to investigate this complaint.

Print name:

Signature:

Date:

### **5. Submitting Your Complaint**

Please return the completed form to:

Town Clerk, marked 'Private and Confidential', and sent directly to the Guildhall by post or by email to [townclerk@saltash.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@saltash.gov.uk)