



Morpeth
Town
Council

**COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY &
PROCEDURE**

Introduction

Morpeth Town Council wants to provide excellent quality services for its residents and visitors, but things can sometimes go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from them. The Town Council sees all customer comments and feedback as a good way of evaluating its services. Complaints and comments are an important part of this process and help us to learn and develop. The Town Council aims to use this information to help drive improvements forward.

Equalities

The Town Council aims to ensure that all written communication and forms are clear, concise, simple to understand and jargon-free. Morpeth Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, or disability.

We Aim to:

- Provide a prompt, courteous and efficient service;
- Provide a full and fair investigation of your comment or complaint;
- Explain procedures to you if you are unsure about anything;
- Respect confidentiality at all times, keeping your personal information in line with Data Protection;
- Keep you informed of progress and the outcome of your complaint, as outlined below;
- Make it easy for customers or those acting on their behalf to make a complaint or pass on comments about a service;
- Try and resolve complaints, put things right where appropriate and take any action necessary to prevent recurrence as soon as practicable;
- Monitor comments and complaints and provide feedback to Members so that trends are highlighted and can be taken into account when decisions are made.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a response, a lack of response, the standard of service you have received or disrespect from a council employee that cannot be resolved through the normal day to day operational processes of the service involved.

A complaint can only relate to a service that the Council already provides. It cannot relate to requests for new services or services provided by other local authorities. However, information provided may highlight gaps in service provision that may be relevant to future consideration and should be recorded and actioned as a comment.

The following list is a guide to the range of complaints which are covered by this Complaints Policy:

- Failure to provide a service or to achieve an acceptable standard.
- Issues regarding the attitude of staff or Councillors¹ and or their actions, or lack of actions.
- Dissatisfaction with the manner in which council policy and procedure has been carried out.
- Discrimination.

¹ This policy will only deal with complaints which are not covered by the Northumberland ALC model code of conduct for local councils which has been adopted by the Council and covers standards of behaviour by Councillors

Compliments and Comments

Compliments - Thanking the Town Council for something done, or done particularly well.

Comments - We recognise that sometimes members of the public simply want to register a comment about a council service, and do not wish to pursue a complaint. In this case we will ensure a record of the comment is maintained and appropriate action is taken on the comment. Where compliments/comments are received by the Council an acknowledgement will be communicated within 3 working days. They will be forwarded to the appropriate Officer for consideration.

What is not a complaint?

The following are excluded from this Complaints Policy:

- A request for service
- A request for information or an explanation
- An insurance claim against the Council
- Criticism of Council policy
- A matter which is, or may be, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings

What do I do if I am unhappy with one of your services?

You can complete the complaints form attached as Appendix A. We will send you an acknowledgement and inform you who is dealing with your complaint within three working days of receiving your completed complaint form.

Alternatively you can make your complaint in writing giving details regarding your complaint.

There are three stages to the Council's complaints procedure:

Stage One

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three working days of contacting us and forwarded to the appropriate officer who will investigate your complaint and reply to you within ten working days. If you are unhappy with the officers' reply you can appeal to the Town Clerk, or in her absence the Deputy Clerk.

You may choose to appeal because:

- you think a finding or penalty is unfair
- additional new evidence comes to light – hearsay or unsubstantiated cannot be accepted
- you think a procedure was not used correctly

Stage Two

We will let you know that we have received your appeal within three working days of you contacting us. The Town Clerk, or in her absence the Deputy Clerk, will investigate and reply to you within fifteen working days. Appeals will initially be heard by the Town Clerk or in her absence the Deputy Clerk, who will not have been involved with the complaint, who will determine if there is a valid reason for appeal.

If the Town Clerk determines there is no valid reason for the appeal there is no further right of appeal at this stage. The initial appeal will be either upheld or dismissed. You have a right of appeal, if you are still not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation. However, you may only appeal because:

- you think a finding or penalty is unfair
- additional new evidence comes to light – hearsay or unsubstantiated cannot be accepted
- you think a procedure was not used correctly

Appeal

You may appeal to the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee who will consider the evidence, based on the criteria set out above, and provide a final response. This will be the final decision and the case will be closed. There is no further right of appeal.

How do we make sure everyone is treated fairly?

We recognise and value the whole community and want to make sure that everyone can use the complaints system. We want to make sure we treat you fairly when making any complaint about us. To help us treat you fairly we ask you to tell us your sex, age, ethnic origin and if you are disabled. If you are using the complaint form, these questions are included although not compulsory.

The information you give is confidential. We only use it to check that we treat all groups of people fairly and we do not discriminate against you. If part of your complaint is about equal opportunities or discrimination, please tell us. We will make sure we look into that for you.

Vexatious/Repetitive Complaints

The Council may choose to give a decision on a complaint, without a formal investigation, where it considers the complaint to be deliberately vexatious or repetitive.

How can I complain?

You can complete the complaints form (see below) giving us full details of the service you are complaining about. If you would like to talk to someone or send a written complaint by post and are unsure who to contact please telephone the Council Offices on 01670 514314 where someone will be able to assist you.

Please return completed forms to:- Morpeth Town Council, Town Council Offices, Town Hall, Market Place Morpeth Northumberland NE61 1LZ.

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINT FORM

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS			
Name			
Address			
Telephone No.			
E-mail address			
ABOUT YOU (optional)			
Male / Female	Do you have a disability? YES / NO		
Age			
Under 12 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	20-29 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	40-49 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Over 60 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>
12-19 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	50-59 <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	
What is your ethnic group?			
Asian British <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White and Asian <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Asian Bangladeshi <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White and Black <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Asian Indian <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Mixed Asian and Black <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Asian Pakistani <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Chinese <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Black African <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	White Irish <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Black British <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	White British <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
Black Caribbean <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>	Other <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/>		
DETAILS OF YOUR COMMENT OR COMPLAINT			
Which service are you contacting us about?			
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-bottom: 10px;"> What is your comment or complaint? Please provide details. </div>			

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
MORPETH TOWN COUNCIL
APPEAL FORM

To: Morpeth Town Council
Town Council Offices,
Town Hall,
Market Place,
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 1LZ.

Name:

Address:

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RE: APPEAL AGAINST: (Please provide details below)

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Reason for the appeal: (please highlight reason and provide details below)

- The finding or penalty is unfair
- New evidence has come to light
- The procedure was not used correctly

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Signature:

Date: