



Complaints Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Fleet Town Council Councillors and Officers serve you, whether you live or work in Fleet or are a visitor. In everything we do we try to put you first. However, like all organisations we can make mistakes.
- 1.2. Fleet Town Council makes a commitment, to listen to your complaint and respond to it quickly and fairly. We will do everything we can to put matters right.
- 1.3. Complaints about a level of service, or an individual Councillor or a Council Officer should be directed in the first instance to the Executive Officer unless the complaint is about the conduct of the Executive Officer which should in the first instance be directed to the Chairman of the Council.
- 1.4. Councillors, in addition, are subject to a Code of Conduct, which if deemed to be breached is dealt with in a very specific manner the details of which are given in Section 8.
- 1.5. Appendix A shows the full process for how the Council manage complaints, according to these 3 categories:
 - Against Executive Officer
 - Relating to the Council's operations
 - Against Councillor Code of Conduct

2. Fleet Town Council's Complaints Code

The Council ensure that staff are aware of the entitlement of members of the public to make a complaint and to ensure that complainant is guided positively and efficiently through the complaint procedure.

The overall aim of the complaints system is to deal with complaints: **swiftly, fairly and with understanding.**

Remember these are your rights and every effort will be taken to resolve complaints satisfactorily.

3. Complaints Procedure

- 3.1. Initial / Informal route: we would ask you to see if the problem can be satisfactorily resolved by the Executive Officer or the Councillor concerned without proceeding further. If the initial communication is by phone, an Officer will take your name, address, and the details of your complaint (sufficient to complete the Complaint Form appended to this Policy) and pass the information to the Executive Officer.
- 3.2. If the issue cannot be resolved by discussion with the Executive Officer or Councillor concerned the matter will be escalated to a Formal Route.
- 3.3. Formal Route: to make a formal complaint you are requested to submit your complaint in writing, preferably using the Complaint Form attached to this Policy, but otherwise providing sufficient personal details that we can get back to you. Other persons can make a complaint on your behalf if you wish. Details of the subsequent procedure are set out in Section 5 below.
- 3.4. If you require help to complete the complaint form, please ask a member of the Council staff.
- 3.5. If you are not sure which Officer or Councillor is the focus of your complaint, please contact the Town Council where a member of staff will give you further advice.
- 3.6. If you prefer, you can submit your complaint in writing as long as you provide sufficient details for an Officer to complete a Complaints Form on your behalf.
- 3.7. The Council will not consider anonymous complaints.
- 3.8. Independent help is also available from Citizens Advice your Town Councillor. His or her name can be obtained from the Town Council offices, the Council's website, or from any copy of the Council's newsletter "Town Talk".

4. Where to forward your complaint

Please forward your complaint by the following methods:

In Person: at the Harlington during office hours

Office hours – Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

Fleet Town Council
The Harlington
236 Fleet Road
Fleet
GU51 4BY

By post
Fleet Town Council
The Harlington
236 Fleet Road
Fleet
GU51 4BY

By telephone: (01252) 625246

By e-mail: executive.officer@fleet-tc.gov.uk OR
chairman@fleet-tc.gov.uk

5. Detailed Procedure

- 5.1. If the complaint cannot be dealt with informally, the complainant will be asked to put their concern in writing to the Executive Officer and they will receive an acknowledgement of the complaint and an assurance that the matter will be dealt with expediently.
- 5.2. All complaints will be dealt with in strict confidence. The Council will not reveal your personal details to any outside party without your permission.
- 5.3. If a complainant would prefer not to put the complaint to the Executive Officer, or the complaint is against the Executive Officer then they should put it to the Chairman of the Council.
- 5.4. When a written complaint is received the Executive Officer or the Chairman of the Council will try to resolve the issue directly with the complainant. In respect of a complaint about the conduct of the Executive Officer, or an Officer it will then be reported to the Chairman of the Establishment Committee, who will, where appropriate, set up a panel of Councillors to investigate the complaint.

- 5.5. Councillors will be appointed as required to the complaints panel, a separate Councillor will be appointed to investigate the complaint and gather evidence from all parties. Evidence will be heard by the complaints panel which may require staff and the complainant to attend. The complaints panel will determine a recommendation to resolve the complaint.
- 5.6. The Executive Officer or the Chairman of the Council will report to the next meeting of the Council all written complaints including those disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
- 5.7. When resolution of the complaint requires Council Policy to be amended, the Executive Officer or the Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee shall bring the matter to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 5.8. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and the public.
- 5.9. The service you receive from the Council will not be affected because you have complained. If your complaint is substantiated, the Council will use your complaint to help improve its service and to avoid similar problems in the future.
- 5.10. As soon as possible, after a decision has been made, any action to be taken will be communicated in writing to the complainant. If a panel has been convened to hear the complaint the complainant will be informed of the decision after the panel meeting has taken place. If the decision has been determined by Council or Policy and Finance Committee the complainant will be notified of the decision after the respective meeting has taken place.
- 5.11 In the event of serial facetious, vexatious, or malicious complaints from a member of the public the Council will consider taking legal advice before any further communication with the complainant.

6. Dissatisfied with the Complaint Decision?

- 6.1. If you are dissatisfied with the Council's decision, you are advised to consult the Local Government Ombudsman or seek advice from Citizens Advice.

7. Complaint against a Councillor for a breach of the Code of Conduct

7.1 Introduction

Councillors are bound by a Code of Conduct that requires them to:

- Show respect to Officers, fellow Councillors, and members of the public.
- Not bully, harass, intimidate, or discriminate.
- Not disclose confidential information and observe data protection regulation.
- Not bring the Council into disrepute.
- Not improperly use their position.
- Not use social media in such a way as to confuse the public as to whether statements are personal or official.
- Not show bias or predetermination.

7.2 Complaint Procedure

- a. If an Officer, a fellow Councillor, or a member of the public is concerned that a Councillor has breached the Code they should submit a complaint, in writing, to the Monitoring Officer at Hart District Council.
You can use this link to complete the form online on the Hart District Council website, https://www.hart.gov.uk/about-council/councilor_complaint
- b. The Monitoring Officer alone, in simple decisions, or together with an independent panel, in more serious situations, will deliver a recommendation to the Town Council and the individuals complained of. The recommendations of the Monitoring Officer will be put into the public domain via the District Council's website.
- c. The recommendations of the Monitoring Officer will be brought before the next available Ordinary Council meeting for ratification or amendment by Full Council.
- d. In the case of disagreement with the recommendation of the Monitoring Officer a full explanation will be given by Full Council.
- e. The debate of the Monitoring Officer's recommendation will be held in confidential session, but the public meeting will be reconvened to announce the Council's resolution.

7.3 Dissatisfied with the Complaint Decision

- a. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Council, they are advised to consult the Local Government Ombudsman.

Fleet Town Council Complaints Form

Date / reference number	
Your Name	
Address	
Contact Tel / email	
Details of Complaint	Please attach separate sheets if required
What action do you consider should be taken	
Action taken by FTC	
Date of notification of decision	
Officer dealing with complaint	

APPENDIX A

