Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy and Finance Approved:	October 2017
Reviewed by Council:	October 2026
Due for Review:	October 2029

1. Introduction

Fleet Town Council is committed to providing a high standard of service to everyone who lives, works in, or visits Fleet.

We recognise that, from time to time, things may go wrong. When this happens, we want to know about it so that we can put matters right where possible and improve our services.

This policy explains how to raise a complaint, how the Council will deal with it, and what you can expect from us.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to complaints about:

- the standard of a Council service;
- the actions or conduct of a Council officer;
- the actions or conduct of a Councillor, where a complaint is made under the adopted Code of Conduct;
- decisions or actions taken on behalf of the Council.

This policy does not replace any legal right of complaint, appeal, or statutory process. Some matters may need to be dealt with under a separate policy or procedure, including:

- grievance or disciplinary procedures for staff;
- the Code of Conduct complaint process for Councillors;
- Freedom of Information or Data Protection procedures;
- safeguarding or whistleblowing arrangements, where relevant.

3. Our complaints principles

The Council will aim to deal with complaints:

- promptly;
- fairly;
- sensitively;
- consistently;
- confidentially, so far as is lawful and appropriate;
- and with a view to learning from the outcome.

A complaint will not affect the standard of service you receive from the Council.

4. How to raise a complaint

Where possible, we encourage you to raise concerns informally first, as many issues can be resolved quickly without the need for a formal complaint.

You may contact the Executive Officer in the first instance.

If your complaint concerns the Executive Officer, please contact the Chair of the Council.

If you are unsure who to contact, the Council office will be pleased to guide you.

5. Informal resolution

If possible, the matter will first be discussed informally with the relevant officer or Councillor.

If the matter can be resolved at this stage, the Council will take reasonable steps to do so and may record the issue for internal monitoring purposes.

If informal resolution is not possible, or if you prefer to make a formal complaint, the matter will move to the formal stage.

6. Formal complaints procedure

6.1. How to make a formal complaint

Please submit your complaint in writing, by email or by post. If you need assistance in doing so, a member of staff will help you.

You should include:

- your name and contact details;
- details of the complaint;
- dates, times, and relevant facts;

- any steps already taken to try to resolve the matter;
- what outcome you are seeking.

The Council will not normally accept anonymous complaints.

6.2. Where to send your complaint

Please submit your complaint using one of the following methods:

In person
Fleet Town Council
The Harlington
236 Fleet Road
Fleet
GU51 4BY
Office hours: Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm

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

By telephone
01252 625246

By email
executive.officer@fleet-tc.gov.uk
bob.schofield@fleet-tc.gov.uk

If you are unsure whom to contact, please telephone the office and your complaint will be directed to the appropriate person.

6.3. Acknowledgement

The Council will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within 5 working days.

6.4. Investigation

The complaint will be considered by the appropriate officer or Councillor, depending on the nature of the matter.

The Council may:

- seek further information;
- invite comments from relevant parties;

- refer the matter to a panel of Councillors where appropriate;
- or deal with the matter directly where this is appropriate and proportionate.

6.5. Timescales

The Council aims to respond to formal complaints within 20 working days.

If the matter is more complex and requires additional time, we will let you know and provide an updated timescale.

7. Complaint about Council officers

Complaints about the conduct or actions of a Council officer should normally be directed to the Executive Officer.

If the complaint is about the Executive Officer, it should be directed to the Chair of the Council.

Where appropriate, the matter may be referred to the Chair of the Establishment Committee and, if necessary, investigated under the relevant staffing procedure.

8. Complaint about Council operations

Where a complaint relates to the Council's operations, service delivery, policy application, or administrative procedures, the Executive Officer will normally seek to resolve it in the first instance.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be considered under the formal complaints process and, where necessary, referred to the relevant committee or to Full Council.

9. Complaint about Councillors and the Code of Conduct

Councillors are required to comply with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct.

If you wish to complain that a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct, you should submit your complaint to the Monitoring Officer at Hart District Council.

The Council does not investigate Code of Conduct complaints itself. These are dealt with by the District Council under its standards arrangements.

Where the Monitoring Officer issues a finding or recommendation, this will be considered in accordance with the relevant standards procedure and the Council's constitutional arrangements.

If you are unsure whether your concern is a service complaint or a Code of Conduct matter, the Council office will be pleased to advise.

10. Confidentiality and data protection

Complaints will be handled sensitively and on a need-to-know basis.

Information may be shared internally or externally where necessary to:

- investigate the complaint;
- seek advice;
- comply with legal obligations;
- or progress the matter properly.

The Council will process personal data in accordance with its Privacy Notice and data protection obligations.

11. Outcomes and responses

At the end of the process, the Council may:

- uphold the complaint in full or in part;
- not uphold the complaint;
- offer an apology;
- explain the reasons for a decision;
- take remedial action;
- recommend service improvements;
- or refer the matter to a relevant committee or procedure.

Where a change to policy or procedure is required, the matter may be referred to the Policy and Finance Committee or Full Council as appropriate.

12. Vexatious, unreasonable or persistent complaints

The Council values constructive complaint handling. However, if a complainant behaves in a persistently unreasonable, repetitive, abusive or vexatious manner, the Council may apply a separate management process and may limit further contact where justified.

Any such decision will be taken carefully and proportionately.

13. What if you remain dissatisfied?

If you remain dissatisfied after the Council has completed its process, you may wish to seek independent advice from Citizens Advice or, where appropriate, contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Please note that some complaints may not be eligible for Ombudsman consideration, depending on the nature of the matter and whether other remedies are available.

14. Recording and monitoring complaints

The Council will keep a record of complaints received and their outcomes.

Complaint records will be used to:

- identify trends;
- improve services;
- inform policy review;
- and support good governance.

FLEET TOWN COUNCIL
COMPLAINTS FORM

Before completing this form
We aim to resolve complaints promptly, fairly and proportionately. Where appropriate, you may wish to raise the matter informally with the Executive Officer first.

Please provide as much relevant information as possible. If you need additional space, please attach a separate sheet and clearly identify it as part of your complaint.

Complaints about Councillor conduct should be submitted to the Monitoring Officer at Hart District Council rather than through this form.

1. Your details

Name	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Preferred method of contact	☐ Email ☐ Telephone ☐ Post

2. What is your complaint about?

☐ A Council service or Council operation

☐ The Executive Officer / Town Clerk

☐ Other matter (please specify):
_____

3. Details of your complaint

Please describe clearly what happened, when and where it happened, and who was involved (if known).
_____

4. What outcome are you seeking?

Please explain what you believe would resolve the matter. We will consider this when reviewing your complaint, but the outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation and the Council's responsibilities and powers.

_____

5. Supporting information

Documents / evidence attached	☐ Yes ☐ No
Number of attachments	
Date complaint submitted	

6. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature	
Date	

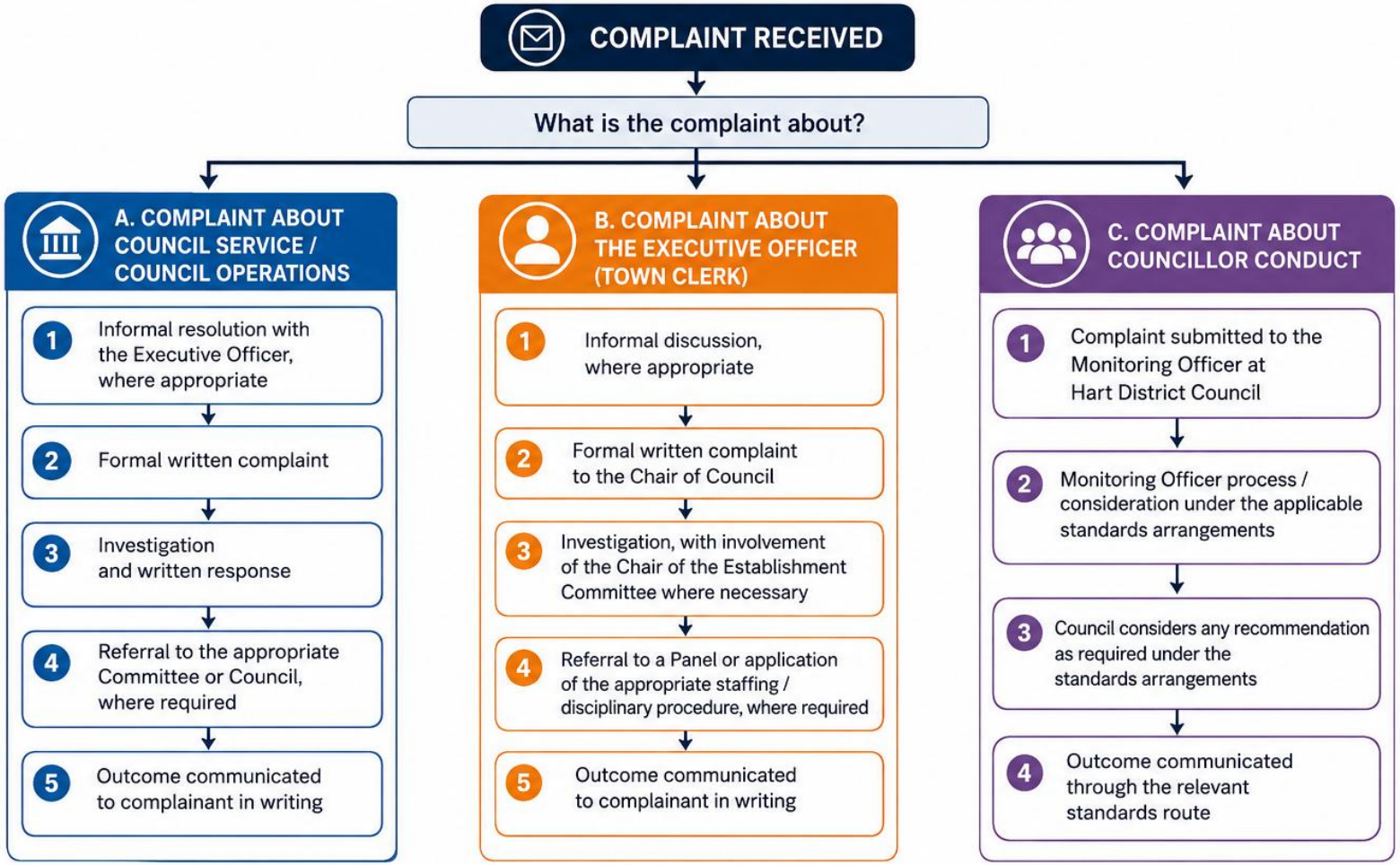
FOR COUNCIL USE ONLY

Complaint reference number	
Date received	
Acknowledgement sent	Date: _____ By: ☐ Email ☐ Post ☐ Other
Officer dealing with complaint	
Action / investigation undertaken	
Committee / Council referral required	☐ No ☐ Yes Details: _____
Decision / outcome	
Date outcome communicated	

Complaints will be handled in accordance with Fleet Town Council's Complaints Procedure.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – FLOW CHART

All complaints will be treated fairly, sensitively and in confidence.



Timescales: Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
We will aim to respond within 20 working days, or advise if more time is needed.