



RUSHDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Complaints Procedure

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction.

Rushden Town Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visiting the area. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try and resolve your complaint.

If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special procedure set out in Standing Orders is followed.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a particular service, whether the action was taken by the Council itself or by a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

When is this procedure not appropriate?

The following types of complaint should be dealt with as follows:-

Financial Irregularity Local elector's statutory right to object to the Council's audit of Accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998. On other matters, the Council may need to consult their auditor / Audit Commission.

Criminal Activity The Police

Member Conduct If the complaint relates to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, this must be submitted to the Monitoring Officer at North Northamptonshire Council.

Employee Conduct Internal disciplinary procedure.

Procedure

1. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk and they cannot satisfy the Complainant fully forthwith, the Complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Town Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
2. If a Complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Town Clerk he or she shall be advised to put it to the Leader.
3. On receipt of a written complaint the Town Clerk or Leader, as the case may be, shall try to settle the complaint directly.
4. The Town Clerk or Leader shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the Complainant.

5. If the complaint cannot be settled, the Town Clerk or Leader shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the Complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council or by the Committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints. The Complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way (if, for example, the complaint is to be heard by a Committee).
6. The Complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting as a member of the public.
7. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the Complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence they may rely on.
8. The Council shall provide the Complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.
9. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council Meeting in public.

Appeal

10. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Committee/Council they can appeal and request a complaints hearing.
11. The Complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
12. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the Complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence they may rely on.
13. The Council shall provide the Complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting within three clear working days prior to the meeting, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Hearing


14. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council Meeting in public.
15. The Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
16. The Complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Town Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii) members.
17. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the Complainant and (ii) members.
18. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and then the Complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

19. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the Complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, *both* parties shall be invited back.
20. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the Complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

21. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

If a member of the public wishes to make a complaint about the conduct of a member of Rushden Town Council then this should be directed to: The Monitoring Officer, North Northamptonshire Council, Sheerness House, Kettering, NN16 8TL

Signed  (Town Mayor)

Date... 16/9/2021.