



SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Complaints Procedure

AIMS OF THE POLICY

This Complaints Procedure relates all complaints to the Town Council, whether these are minor, serious, informal or formal and apply to all services provided by the Council.

Separate arrangements as prescribed by law are in place in respect of Councillors. These arrangements set out further in this policy.

The Town Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints will help us to improve the services provided on behalf of residents, visitors and those working within the Town.

This policy does not apply to complaints from members of staff. These will be considered under the Grievance Procedure.

The aim of this Complaints procedure is to swiftly investigate all complaints in an impartial manner and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the Town Council.

DEFINITION OF COMPLAINTS

People's perceptions differ widely. It is therefore very difficult to give a precise definition of a complaint. However, for our purposes, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service undertaken by Shrewsbury Town Council or any of its employees' or contractors.

More specifically, a complaint is where:

- The Town Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does
- The Town Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of established practice
- The conduct or behaviour of an employee or contractor working for the Town Council is unsatisfactory
- The established levels of service delivery are not reached
- A person does not understand or is not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists
- An adopted and known procedure is not followed
- There may have been maladministration

This Complaints Procedure will not apply to complaints made anonymously.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

Your complaint can be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing, giving names and addresses and relevant dates with as much information as possible.

The appropriate details for contacting the Town Council are:

By **telephone** on 01743 281010

By **email** at complaints@shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk

Via our **website** at <https://www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk/contact-us/compliments-complaints/>

In many cases, it will possible for an issue to be dealt with straight away and the source of the complaint resolved immediately.

For more complex issues, it is much better to put these in writing so that a thorough investigation can be undertaken. Investigations will be dealt with as quickly as possible. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your complaint within five working days and a full response to your complaint will be provided according to the timetable below.

The Town Council maintains a register of complaints showing dates, details of the complaint, complainant and the action taken to resolve the issue. This is available for all members of the Town Council to inspect. Serious complaints will be reported to Councillors.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT COUNCILLORS

All Councillors are required to observe the 'Code of Conduct' available on both the Town Council and Shropshire Council's websites.

If you believe that a Town Councillor has not followed the Code, you can complain to the Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council and they will look into the matter. They are contactable via the website at <https://shropshire.gov.uk/legal-and-democratic-services/shropshire-councillors/complaints-about-councillor-conduct/> or via Legal and Democratic Services, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

If it has not been possible to deal with your complaint informally, the following section lays out the procedure and timelines under which your complaint will be dealt with.

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

Task	Timescale	Actions
Complaint is received	Day 1	
Acknowledgement	By Day 4 - Within three working days of receipt of the complaint	The administration team will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant and will notify them of the name of the officer handling their complaint and the target date for a response.
Response due	By Day 28	The responding officer will provide a full response to the complainant outlining the right to appeal if they are not satisfied with the outcome.
Request for extension	By Day 28	The responding officer will inform the complainant that the complaint cannot be resolved within the 28 day timeframe and give the reasons why along with an estimate of how long the complaint will take to respond to.
Appeal	Within 14 days of the receipt of the Stage 1 response	If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure they have a right to appeal this at Stage 2. This is their only and final stage of appeal.

Stage 2 – Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure they have a right to appeal this at Stage 2. This is their only and final stage of appeal.

Task	Timescale	Actions
Appeal is made in writing	Day 1	All appeals should be sent for the attention of the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk dealt with the complaint at Stage 1 they will refer the issue to another senior officer or the Town Council's Complaints, FOI and Data Protection Committee as appropriate.
Acknowledgement	By Day 4 - Within three working days of receipt of the complaint	The Town Clerk (or nominated senior officer) will acknowledge receipt of the appeal to the complainant and will notify them of the target date for a response.
Response due	As soon as possible but no later than Day 28	The Town Clerk (or nominated senior officer) will provide a full response to the complainant.
Request for extension	As soon as possible but no later than Day 28	The Town Clerk (or nominated senior officer) will inform the complainant that the complaint cannot be resolved within the 28 day timeframe and give the reasons why along with an estimate of how long the complaint will take to respond to.

The purpose of a Stage 2 Appeal is to consider if:

- The customer's complaint has been fully understood and addressed at Stage 1.
- All the relevant evidence has been taken into account.
- The Town Council's policies and procedures have been properly followed.
- The Complaints Procedure was carried out properly and fairly.
- The conclusions reached on the basis of evidence are reasonable and fair.
- Any other actions or remedies are appropriate.

It is not to:

- Review Town Council policy.
- Deal with any new matters not part of the original complaint.
- Cover any points dealt with by a court or where an appeal against a decision lies with a court or other legal process.

Complaints about issues that occurred more than two years ago will not normally be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances. Similarly there will be no review of a complaint that was dealt with more than two years ago.

COMPLAINTS, FOI AND DATA PROTECTION COMMITTEE

The overall purpose of this committee is to maintain a level of fairness in the discharge of the Council's duties in relation to non-staff complaints, Freedom of Information Requests and Data Protection.

Specifically the committee will:

- Undertake any reviews in relation to the Council’s Code of Practice for Handling Complaints and Freedom of Information Refusals.
- Consider complaints that cannot be/it is inappropriate to be satisfied by informal measures; the intention being that complaints are always dealt with as quickly as possible to avoid escalation.
- Consider any other matters delegated to the Committee by the Council.

If a complaint is heard by the committee the complainant will be given the opportunity to attend. The decision to attend or not will not adversely impact upon the consideration of the complaint in any way.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE TOWN CLERK

If the complaint is about the Town Clerk the complaint will be reviewed by the Town Council’s Complaints, FOI and Data Protection Committee. This committee is made up of a group of Councillors who would not have been involved with the issue previously.

The Committee will be convened as soon as possible but no later than 30 working days from the receipt of the complaint. Once the meeting has taken place they will respond to the complainant within 10 working days.

The Committee’s decision is final.

Approved by Financial and General Purposes Committee (via a sub group)	4 January 2023
Adopted by Council	
Review Date	January 2025